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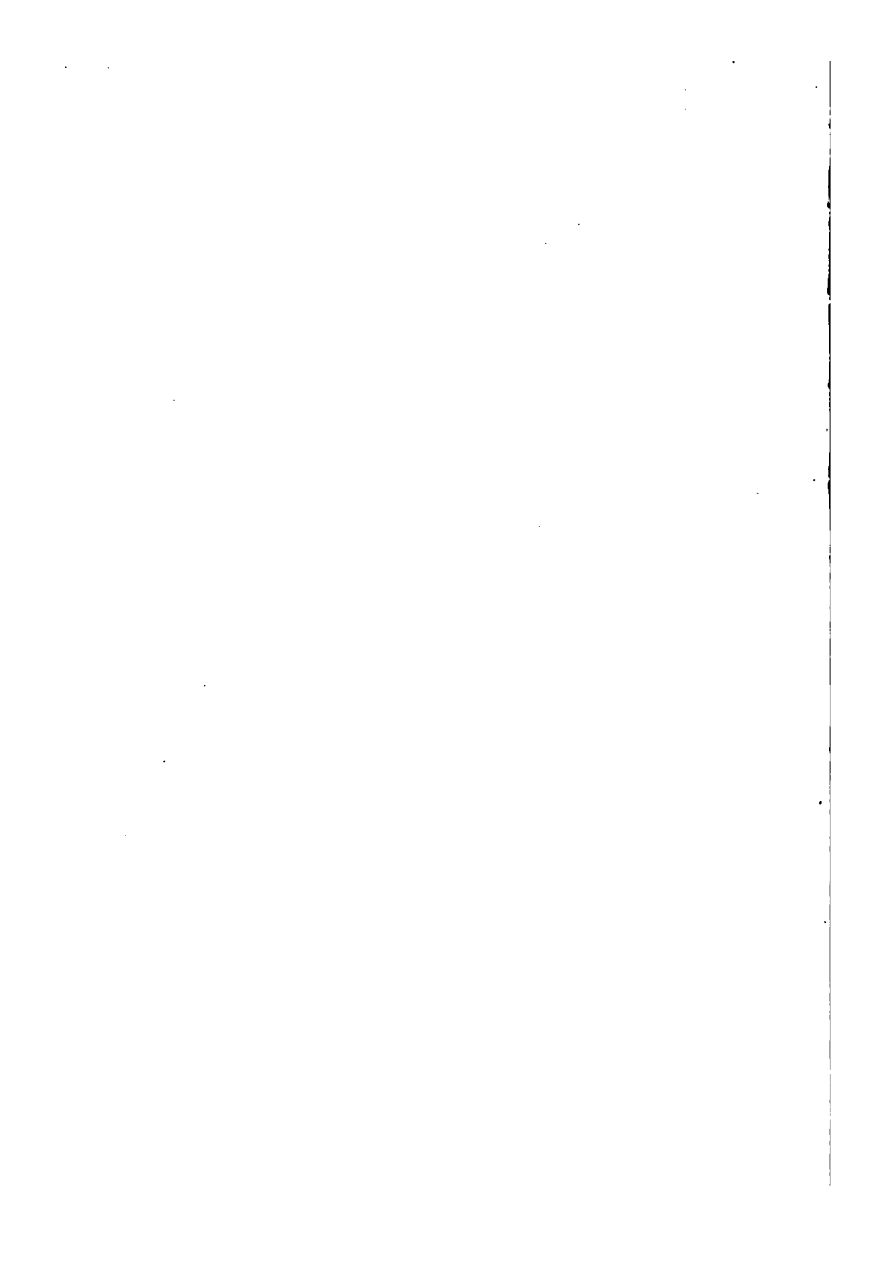


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IN THE  
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*A ROMANCE OF OLD NUREMBERG*

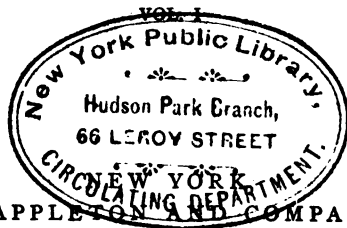
BY  
**GEORG EBERS**

AUTHOR OF  
CLEOPATRA, UARDA, AN EGYPTIAN PRINCESS, SERAPIS, JOSHUA,  
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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY MARY J. SAFFORD

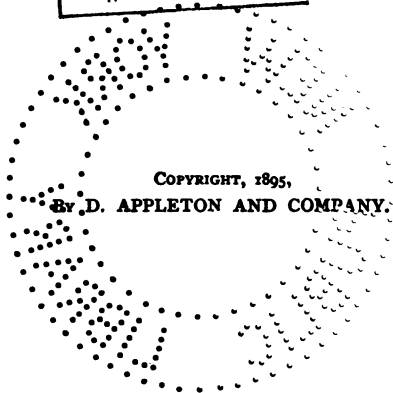
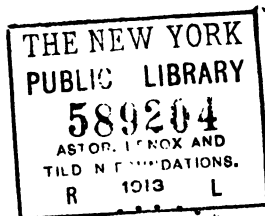
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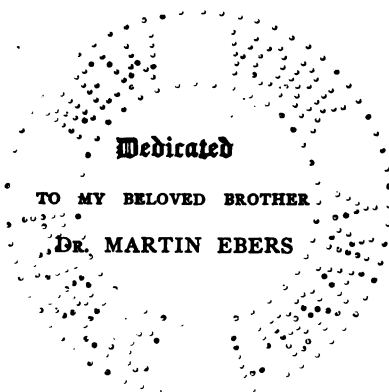
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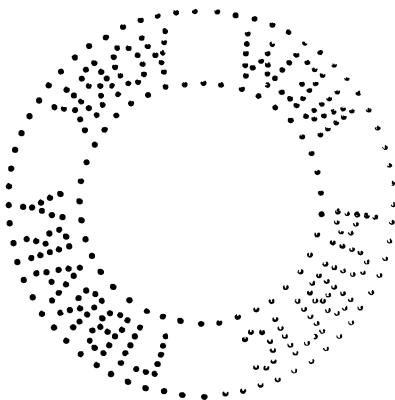


**Medicated**

**TO MY BELOVED BROTHER**

**Dr. MARTIN EBERS**



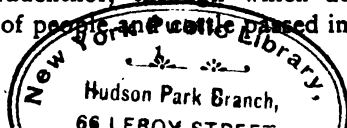


PROPERTY OF THE  
CITY OF NEW YORK.  
IN THE FIRE OF THE FORGE.

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CHAPTER I.

ON the eve of St. Medard's Day in the year 1281, the moon, which had just risen, was shining brightly upon the imperial free city of Nuremberg; its rays found their way into the street leading from the strong Marienthurm to the Frauenthor, but entrance to the Ortlieb mansion was barred by a house, a watchtower, and—most successfully of all—by a tall linden tree. Yet there was something to be seen here which even now, when Nuremberg sheltered the Emperor Rudolph and so many secular and ecclesiastical princes, counts, and knights, awakened Luna's curiosity. True, this something had naught in common with the brilliant spectacles of which there was no lack during this month of June; on the contrary, it was very quiet here. An imperial command prohibited the soldiery from moving about the city at night, and the Frauenthor, through which during the day plenty of people and cattle passed in and out.



had been closed long before. Very few of the worthy burghers—who went to bed betimes and rose so early that they rarely had leisure to enjoy the moonlight long—passed here at this hour. The last one, an honest master weaver, had moved with a very crooked gait. As he saw the moon double—like everything else around and above him—he had wondered whether the man up there had a wife. He expected no very pleasant reception from his own at home. The watchman, who—the moon did not exactly know why—lingered a short time in front of the Ortlieb mansion, followed the burgher. Then came a priest who, with the sacristan and several lantern bearers, was carrying the sacrament to a dying man in St. Claren-gasse.

There was usually more to be seen at this hour on the other side of the city—the northwestern quarter—where the fortress rose on its hill, dominating the Thiergartenthor at its foot; for the Emperor Rudolph occupied the castle, and his brother-in-law, Burgrave Friedrich von Zollern, his own residence. This evening, however, there was little movement even there; the Emperor and his court, the Burgrave and his train, with all the secular and ecclesiastical princes, counts, and knights, had gone to the Town Hall with their ladies. High revel was held there, and inspiring music echoed through the open windows of the spacious apartment, where the Emperor Rudolph also

remained during the ball. Here the moonbeams might have been reflected from glittering steel or the gold, silver, and gems adorning helmets, diadems, and gala robes; or they might surely have found an opportunity to sparkle on the ripples of the Pegnitz River, which divided the city into halves; but the heavenly wanderer, from the earliest times, has preferred leafy hidden nooks to scenes of noisy gaiety, a dim light to a brilliant glare. Luna likes best to gaze where there is a secret to be discovered, and mortals have always been glad to choose her as a confidante. Something exactly suited to her taste must surely be going on just now near the linden which, in all the splendour of fullest bloom, shaded the street in front of the Ortlieb mansion; for she had seen two fair girls grow up in the ancient dwelling with the carved escutcheon above the lofty oak door, and the ample garden—and the younger, from her earliest childhood, had been on especially intimate terms with her.

Now the topmost boughs of the linden, spite of their dense foliage, permitted a glimpse of the broad courtyard which separated the patrician residence from the street.

A chain, which with graceful curves united a short row of granite posts, shut out the pedestrians, the vehicles and horsemen, the swine and other animals driven through the city gate. In contrast with the street, which in bad weather resembled an

almost impassable swamp, it was always kept scrupulously clean, and the city beadle might spare himself the trouble of looking there for the carcasses of sucking pigs, cats, hens, and rats, which it was his duty to carry away.

A young man with an unusually tall and powerful figure was standing in this yard, gazing up at a window in the second story. The shadow of the linden concealed his features and his dress, but the moon had already seen him more than once in this very spot and knew that he was a handsome fellow, whose bronzed countenance, with its prominent nose and broad brow, plainly indicated a strong will. She had also seen the scar stretching from the roots of his long brown locks across the whole forehead to the left cheek-bone, that lent the face a martial air. Yet he belonged to no military body, but was the son of a noble family of Nuremberg, which boasted, it is true, of "knightly blood" and the right of its sons to enter the lists of the tournament, but was engaged in peaceful pursuits; for it carried on a trade with Italy and the Netherlands, and every male scion of the Eysvogel race had the birthright of being elected a member of the Honourable Council and taking part in the government of Nuremberg.

The moon had long known that the young man in the courtyard was an Eysvogel, nor was this difficult to discover. Every child in Nuremberg was familiar with the large showy coat of arms

lately placed above the lofty doorway of the Eysvogel mansion; and the nocturnal visitor wore a doublet on whose left breast was embroidered the same coat of arms, with three birds in the shield and one on the helmet.

He had already waited some time in vain, but now a young girl's head appeared at the window, and a gay fresh voice called his Christian name, "Wolff!"

Waving his cap, he stepped nearer to the casement, greeted her warmly, and told her that he had come at this late hour to say good-night, though only from the front yard.

"Come in," she entreated. "True, my father and Eva have gone to the dance at the Town Hall, but my aunt, the abbess, is sitting with my mother."

"No, no," replied Wolff, "I only stopped in passing. Besides, I am stealing even this brief time."

"Business?" asked the young girl. "Do you know, I am beginning to be jealous of the monster which, like an old spider, constantly binds you closer and closer in its web. What sort of dealing is this?—to give the whole day to business, and only a few minutes of moonlight to your betrothed bride!"

"I wish it were otherwise," sighed Wolff. "You do not know how hard these times are, Els! Nor how many thoughts beset my brain, since my



father has placed me in charge of all his new enterprises."

"Always something new," replied Els, with a shade of reproach in her tone. "What an omnivorous appetite this Eysvogel business possesses! Ullmann Nützel said lately: 'Wherever one wants to buy, the bird\* has been ahead and snapped up everything in Venice and Milan. And the young one is even sharper at a bargain,' he added."

"Because I want to make a warm nest for you, dearest," replied Wolff.

"As if we were shopkeepers anxious to secure customers!" said the girl, laughing. "I think the old Eysvogel house must have enough big stoves to warm its son and his wife. At the Tuckers the business supports seven, with their wives and children. What more do we want? I believe that we love each other sincerely, and though I understand life better than Eva, to whom poverty and happiness are synonymous, I don't need, like the women of your family, gold plates for my breakfast porridge or a bed of Levantine damask for my lapdog. And the dowry my father will give me would supply the daughters of ten knights."

"I know it, sweetheart," interrupted Wolff dejectedly; "and how gladly. I would be content with the smallest——"

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\* Play upon the word. *Vogel* means bird.—TR.

"Then be so!" she exclaimed cheerily. "What you would call 'the smallest,' others term wealth. You want *more* than competence, and I—the saints know—would be perfectly content with 'good.' Many a man has been shipwrecked on the cliffs of 'better' and 'best.'"

Fired with passionate ardour, he exclaimed, "I am coming in now."

"And the business?" she asked mischievously.

"Let it go as it will," he answered eagerly, waving his hand. But the next instant he dropped it again, saying thoughtfully: "No, no; it won't do, there is too much at stake."

Els had already turned to send Kätterle, the maid, to open the heavy house door, but ere doing so she put her beautiful head out again, and asked:

"Is the matter really so serious? Won't the monster grant you even a good-night kiss?"

"No," he answered firmly. "Your menservants have gone, and before the maid could open—There is the moon rising above the linden already. It won't do. But I'll see you to-morrow and, please God, with a lighter heart. We may have good news this very day."

"Of the wares from Venice and Milan?" asked Els anxiously.

"Yes, sweetheart. Two waggon trains will meet at Verona. The first messenger came from Ingolstadt, the second from Munich, and the one

from Landshut has been here since day before yesterday. Another should have arrived this morning, but the intense heat yesterday, or some cause—at any rate there is reason for anxiety. You don't know what is at stake."

"But peace was proclaimed yesterday," said Els, "and if robber knights and bandits should venture—— But, no! Surely the waggons have a strong escort."

"The strongest," answered Wolff. "The first wain could not arrive before to-morrow morning."

"You see!" cried the girl gaily. "Just wait patiently. When you are once mine I'll teach you not to look on the dark side. O Wolff, why is everything made so much harder for us than for others? Now this evening, it would have been so pleasant to go to the ball with you."

"Yet, how often, dearest, I have urged you in vain——" he began, but she hastily interrupted:

"Yes, it was certainly no fault of yours, but one of us must remain with my mother, and Eva——"

"Yesterday she complained to me with tears in her eyes that she would be forced to go to this dance, which she detested."

"That is the very reason she ought to go," explained Els. "She is eighteen years old, and has never yet been induced to enter into any of the pleasures other girls enjoy. When she isn't in the convent she is always at home, or with Aunt

Kunigunde or one of the nuns in the woods and fields. If she wants to take the veil later, who can prevent it, but the abbess herself advises that she should have at least a glimpse of the world before leaving it. Few need it more, it seems to me, than our Eva."

"Certainly," Wolff assented. "Such a lovely creature! I know no girl more beautiful in all Nuremberg."

"Oh! you——," said his betrothed bride, shaking her finger at her lover, but he answered promptly,

"You just told me that you preferred 'good' to 'better,' and so doubtless 'fair' to 'fairer,' and you are beautiful, Els, in person and in soul. As for Eva, I admire, in pictures of madonnas and angels, those wonderful saintly eyes with their uplifted gaze and marvellously long lashes, the slight droop of the little head, and all the other charms; yet I gladly dispense with them in my heart's darling and future wife. But you, Els—if our Lord would permit me to fashion out of divine clay a life companion after my own heart, do you know how she would look?"

"Like me—exactly like Els Ortlieb, of course," replied the girl laughing.

"A correct guess, with all due modesty," Wolff answered gaily. "But take care that she does not surpass your wishes. For you know, if the little saint should meet at the dance some hand-

some fellow whom she likes better than the garb of a nun, and becomes a good Nuremberg wife, the excess of angelic virtue will vanish; and if I had a brother—in serious earnest—I would send him to your Eva.”

“And,” cried Els, “however quickly her mood changes, it will surely do her no harm. But as yet she cares nothing about you men. I know her, and the tears she shed when our father gave her the costly Milan suckenie,\* in which she went to the ball, were anything but tears of joy.”

“I only wonder,” added Wolff, “that you persuaded her to go; the pious lamb knows how to use her horns fiercely enough.”

“Oh, yes,” Els assented, as if she knew it by experience; then she eagerly continued, “She is still just like an April day.”

“And therefore,” Wolff remarked, “the dance which she began with tears will end joyously enough. The young knights and nobles will gather round her like bees about honey. Count von Montfort, my brother-in-law Siebenburg says, is also at the Town Hall with his daughter.”

“And the comet Cordula was followed, as usual, by a long train of admirers,” said Els. “My father was obliged to give the count lodg-

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\* A long garment, fitting the upper part of the body closely and widening very much below the waist, with openings for the arms.

ings; it could not be avoided. The Emperor Rudolph had named him to the Council among those who must be treated with special courtesy. So he was assigned to us, and the whole suite of apartments in the back of the house, overlooking the garden, is now filled with Montforts, Montfort household officials, menservants, squires, pages, and chaplains. Montfort horses and hounds crowd our good steeds out of their stalls. Besides the twenty stabled here, eighteen were put in the brewery in the Hundsgasse, and eight belong to Countess Cordula. Then the constant turmoil all day long and until late at night! It is fortunate that they do not lodge with us in the front of the house! It would be very bad for my mother!"

"Then you can rejoice over the departure all the more cordially," observed Wolff.

"It will hardly cause us much sorrow," Els admitted. "Yet the young countess brings much merriment into our quiet house. She is certainly a tireless madcap, and it will vex your proud sister Isabella to know that your brother-in-law Siebenburg is one of her admirers. Did she not go to the Town Hall?"

"No," Wolff answered; "the twins have changed her wonderfully. You saw the dress my mother pressed upon her for the ball—Genoese velvet and Venetian lace! Its cost would have bought a handsome house. She was inclined, too, to appear as a young mother at the festival, and



I assure you that she looked fairly regal in the magnificent attire. But this morning, after she had bathed the little boys, she changed her mind. Though my mother, and even my grandmother, urged her to go, she insisted that she belonged to the twins, and that some evil would befall the little ones if she left them."

"That is noble!" cried Els in delight, "and if I should ever——. Yet no, Isabella and I cannot be compared. My husband will never be numbered among the admirers of another woman, like your detestable brother-in-law. Besides, he is wasting time with Cordula. Her worldliness repels Eva, it is true, but I have heard many pleasant things about her. Alas! she is a motherless girl, and her father is an old reveller and huntsman, who rejoices whenever she does any audacious act. But he keeps his purse open to her, and she is kind-hearted and obliging to a degree——"

"Equalled by few," interrupted Wolff, with a sneer. "The men know how to praise her for it. No paternoster would be imposed upon her in the confessional on account of cruel harshness."

"Nor for a sinful or a spiteful deed," replied Els positively. "Don't say anything against her to me, Wolff, in spite of your dissolute brother-in-law. I have enough to do to intercede for her with Eva and Aunt Kunigunde since she singed and oiled the locks of a Swiss knight belonging to the Emperor's court. Our Kätterle brought the

coals. But many other girls do that, since courtesy permits it. Her train to the Town Hall certainly made a very brave show ; the fifty freight waggons you are expecting will scarcely form a longer line."

The young merchant started. The comparison roused his forgotten anxiety afresh, and after a few brief, tender words of farewell he left the object of his love. Els gazed thoughtfully after him ; the moonlight revealed his tall, powerful figure for a long time. Her heart throbbed faster, and she felt more deeply than ever how warmly she loved him. He moved as though some heavy burden of care bowed his strong shoulders. She would fain have hastened after him, clung to him, and asked what troubled him, what he was concealing from her who was ready to share everything with him, but the Frauenthor, through which he entered the city, already hid him from her gaze.

She turned back into the room with a faint sigh. It could scarcely be solely anxiety about his expected goods that burdened her lover's mind. True, his weak, arrogant mother, and still more his grandmother, the daughter of a count, who lived with them in the Eysvogel house and still ruled her daughter as if she were a child, had opposed her engagement to Wolff, but their resistance had ceased since the betrothal. On the other hand, she had often heard that Frau Eysvogel, the haughty mother, dowerless herself, had many poor

and extravagant relations besides her daughter and her debt-laden, pleasure-loving husband, Sir Seitz Siebenburg, who, it could not be denied, all drew heavily upon the coffers of the ancient mercantile house. Yet it was one of the richest in Nuremberg. Yes, something of which she was still ignorant must be oppressing Wolff, and, with the firm resolve to give him no peace until he confessed everything to her, she returned to the couch of her invalid mother.

## CHAPTER II.

WOLFF had scarcely vanished from the street, and Els from the window, when a man's slender figure appeared, as if it had risen from the earth, beside the spurge-laurel tree at the left of the house. Directly after some one rapped lightly on the pavement of the yard, and in a few minutes the heavy ironbound oak doors opened and a woman's hand beckoned to the late guest, who glided swiftly along in the narrow line of shadow cast by the house and vanished through the entrance.

The moon looked after him doubtfully. In former days the narrow-shouldered fellow had been seen near the Ortlieb house often enough, and his movements had awakened Luna's curiosity; for he had been engaged in amorous adventure even when work was still going on at the recently completed convent of St. Clare—an institution endowed by the Ebner brothers, to which Herr Ernst Ortlieb added a considerable sum. At that time—about three years before—the bold fellow had gone there to keep tryst evening after evening, and the pretty girl who met him was Kätterle,

the waiting maid of the beautiful Es, as Nuremberg folk called the Ortlieb sisters, Els and Eva.

Many vows of ardent, changeless love for her had risen to the moon, and the outward aspect of the man who made them afforded a certain degree of assurance that he would fulfil his pledges, for he then wore the long dark robe of reputable people, and on the front of his cap, from which a net shaped like a bag hung down his back, was a large S, and on the left shoulder of his long coat a T, the initials of the words Steadfast and True. They bore witness that the person who had them embroidered on his clothing deemed these virtues the highest and noblest. It might have been believed that the lean fellow, who scarcely looked his five-and-thirty years, possessed these lofty traits of character; for, though three full years had passed since his last meeting with Kätterle at the building site, he had gone to his sweetheart with his wonted steadfastness and truth immediately after the Emperor Rudolph's entry.

He had given her reason to rely upon him; but the moon's gaze reaches far, and had discovered the quality of Walther Biberli's "steadfastness and truth."

In one respect it proved the best and noblest; for among thousands of servitors the moon had not seen one who clung to his lord with more loyal devotion. Towards pretty young women, on the contrary, he displayed his principal virtues in a

very singular way ; for the pallid nocturnal wanderer above had met him in various lands and cities, and wherever he tarried long another maid was added to the list of those to whom Biberli vowed steadfastness and truth.

True, whenever Sir Long Coat's travels led him back to any one to whom he had sworn eternal love, he went first to her, if she, too, retained the old affection. But Kätterle had cause to care for him most, for he was more warmly devoted to her than to any of the others, and in his own fashion his intentions were honest. He seriously intended, as soon as his master left the imperial court—which he hoped would not happen too soon—and returned to his ancestral castle in his native Switzerland, to establish a home of his own for his old age, and no one save Kätterle should light the hearth fire. Her outward circumstances pleased him, as well as her disposition and person. She was free-born, like himself—the son of a forest keeper—and, again like him, belonged to a Swiss family ; her heritage (she was an orphan), which consisted of a house and arable land in her home, Sarnen, where she still sent her savings, satisfied his requirements. But above all she believed in him and admired his versatile mind and his experience. Moreover, she gave him absolute obedience, and loved him so loyally that she had remained unwedded, though a number of excellent men had sought her in marriage.



Kätterle had met him for the first time more than three years before when, after the battle of Marchfield, he remained several weeks in Nuremberg. They had sat side by side at a tournament, and, recognising each other as Swiss-born by the sharp sound of the letters "ch" and the pronunciation of other words, were mutually attracted.

Kätterle had a kind heart ; yet at that time she almost yielded to the temptation to pray Heaven not to hasten the cure of a brave man's wounds too quickly, for she knew that Biberli was a squire in the service of the young Swiss knight Heinz Schorlin, whose name was on every lip because, in spite of his youth, he had distinguished himself at the battle of Marchfield by his rare bravery, and that the young hero would remain in Nuremberg only until his severe injuries were completely healed. His departure would bring to her separation from his servant, and sometimes when homesickness tortured her she thought she would be unable to survive the parting. Meanwhile Biberli nursed his master with faithful zeal, as if nothing bound him to Nuremberg, and even after his departure Kätterle remained in good health.

Now she had him again. Directly after the Emperor Rudolph's entrance, five days before, Biberli had come openly to the Ortlieb house and presented himself to Martsche,\* the old house-

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\* Margaret.

keeper, as the countryman and friend of the waiting maid, who had brought her a message from home.

True, it had been impossible to say anything confidential either in the crowded kitchen or in the servants' hall. To-night's meeting was to afford the opportunity.

The menservants, carrying sedan chairs and torches, had all gone out with their master, who had taken his younger daughter, Eva, to the dance. They were to wait in front of the Town Hall, because it was doubtful whether the daughter of the house, who had been very reluctant to go to the entertainment, might not urge an early departure. Count von Montfort, whose quarters were in the Ortlieb mansion, and his whole train of male attendants, certainly would not come back till very late at night or even early morning, for the Countess Cordula remained at a ball till the close, and her father lingered over the wine cup till his daughter called him from the revellers.

All this warranted the lovers in hoping for an undisturbed interview. The place of meeting was well chosen. It was unsatisfactory only to the moon for, after Biberli had closed the heavy door of the house behind him, Luna found no chink or crevice through which a gliding ray might have watched what the true and steadfast Biberli was saying to Kätterle. There was one little window beside the door, but it was closed, and the opening

was covered with sheepskin. So the moon's curiosity was not gratified.

Instead of her silver rays, the long entry of the Ortlieb house, with its lofty ceiling, was illumined only by the light of three lanterns, which struggled dimly through horn panes. The shining dots in a dark corner of the spacious corridor were the eyes of a black cat, watching there for rats and mice.

The spot really possessed many advantages for the secret meeting of two lovers, for as it ran through the whole width of the house, it had two doors, one leading to the street, the other into the yard. In the right wall of the entry there were also two small doors, reached by a flight of steps. At this hour both closed empty rooms, for the office and the chamber where Herr Ernst Ortlieb received his business friends had not been occupied since sunset, and the bathroom and dressing-room adjoining were used only during the day.

True, some unbidden intruder might have come down the long broad staircase leading to the upper story. But in that case the lovers had the best possible hiding-place close at hand, for here large and small boxes, standing side by side and one above another, formed a protecting wall; yonder heaps of sacks and long rows of casks afforded room for concealment behind them. Rolls of goods packed in sacking leaned against the chests, inviting a fugitive to slip back of them, and surely no one would suspect the presence of a pair of

lovers in the rear of these mountains of hides and bales wrapped in matting. Still it would scarcely have been advisable to remain near them; for these packages, which the Ortlieb house brought from Venice, contained pepper and other spices that exhaled a pungent odor, endurable only by hardened nerves.

Valuable goods of various kinds lay here until they could be placed in cellars or storehouses or sold. But there was many an empty space, too, in the broad corridor for, spite of Emperor Rudolph's strictness, robbery on the highroads had by no means ceased, and Herr Ernst Ortlieb was still compelled to use caution in the transportation of costly wares.

After Biberli and his sweetheart had assured themselves that the ardour of their love had by no means cooled, they sat down on some bags filled with cloves and related to each other the experiences through which they had passed during the period of separation.

Kätterle's life had flowed on in a pleasant monotony. She had no cause to complain of her employers.

Frau Maria Ortlieb, the invalid mistress of the house, rarely needed her services.

During a ride to visit relatives in Ulm, the travellers, who were under the same escort of men at arms as a number of Nuremberg freight wagons, had been attacked by the robber knights

Absbach and Hirschhorn. An arrow had struck Frau Ortlieb's palfrey, causing the unfortunate woman a severe fall, which produced an internal injury, from which she had not yet recovered. The assault resulted unfortunately for young Hirschhorn, who led it; he met with a shameful death on the gallows.

The information enraged Biberli. Instead of feeling any sympathy for the severely injured lady, he insisted that the Nuremberg burghers had dealt with Hirschhorn in a rascally fashion; for he was a knight, and therefore, as honest judges familiar with the law, they ought to have put him to death by the sword instead of with the rope. And Kätterle agreed with him; she never contradicted his opinions, and surely Biberli must know what treatment befitted a knight, since he was the foster-brother of one.

Nor did the maid, who was in the personal service of the daughters of the house, make any complaint against them. Indeed, she could not praise Els, the elder, sufficiently. She was very just, the careful nurse of her invalid mother, and always unvarying in her cheerful kindness.

She had no fault to find with Eva either, especially as she was more religious than any one in the whole house. Spite of her marvellous beauty—Kätterle knew that there was nothing false about it—she would probably end by joining the nuns in the convent. But her mood changed with every

breath, like the weathercock on the steeple. If she got out of bed the wrong way, or one did not guess her wishes before they were uttered, she would fly into a rage at the least trifle. Then she sometimes used very unkind words; but no one could cherish anger against her long, for she had an indescribably lovely manner of trying to atone for the offences which her hasty young blood made her commit. She had gone to the ball that night as if it were a funeral; she shunned men like poison, and even kept out of the way of her sister's friends.

Biberli laughed, as if there could be no doubt of his opinion, and exclaimed: "Just wait a while! My master will meet her at the Town Hall to-night, and if the scrawny little squirrel I saw three years ago has really grown up into such a beauty, if he does not get on her track and capture her, my name isn't Biberli."

"But surely," replied Kätterle doubtfully, "you told me that you had not yet succeeded in persuading him to imitate you in steadfastness and truth."

"But he is a knight," replied the servant, striking himself pompously under the T on his shoulder, as if he, too, belonged to this favoured class, "and so he is as free to pursue a woman as to hunt the game in the forest. And my Heinz Schorlin! You saw him, and admitted that he was worth looking at. And that was when he had

scarcely recovered from his dangerous wounds, while now—— The French Knight de Preully, in Paris, with whom my dead foster-brother, until he fell sick——” Here he hesitated; an enquiring look from his sweetheart showed that—perhaps for excellent reasons—he had omitted to tell her about his sojourn in Paris.

Now that he had grown older and abandoned the wild revelry of that period in favour of truth and steadfastness, he quietly related everything she desired to know.

He had acquired various branches of learning while sharing the studies of his foster-brother, the eldest son of the old Knight Schorlin, who was then living, and therefore, when scarcely twenty, was appointed schoolmaster at Stansstadt. Perhaps he might have continued to teach—for he promised to be successful—had not a vexatious discovery disgusted him with his calling.

He was informed that the mercenaries in the Schnitzthurm guard were paid five shillings a week more than he, spite of the knowledge he had gained by so much toil.

In his indignation he went back to Schorlin Castle, which was always open to him, and he arrived just at the right time.

His present master's older brother, whose health had always been delicate, being unable to follow the profession of arms, was on the eve of departing to attend the university at Paris, accompanied

by the chaplain and an equerry. When the Lady Wendula, his master's mother, learned what an excellent reputation Biberli had gained as a school-master, she persuaded her husband to send him as esquire with their sickly son.

In Paris there was at first no lack of pleasures of every description, especially as they met among the king's mercenaries many a dissolute Swiss knight and man at arms. His foster-brother, to his sorrow, was unable to resist the temptations which Satan scatters in Paris as the peasants elsewhere sow rye and oats, and the young knight was soon attacked by a severe illness. Then Biberli's gay life ended too. For months he did not leave his foster-brother's sick bed a single hour, by day or night, until death released him from his suffering.

On his return to Castle Schorlin he found many changes; the old knight had been called away from earth a few days before his son's death, and Heinz Schorlin, his present master, had fallen heir to castle and lands. This, however, was no great fortune, for the large estates of the Schorlin family were burdened by heavy debts.

The dead lord, as countryman, boon companion, and brother in arms of the Emperor Rudolph, had been always ready to place his sword at his service, and whenever a great tournament was held he never failed to be present. So the property had been consumed, and the Lady Wendula



and her son and three daughters were left in moderate circumstances. The two older girls had taken the veil, while the youngest, a merry little maiden, lived with her mother.

But the Emperor Rudolph had by no means forgotten the Lady Wendula and her dead husband, and with the utmost kindness requested her to send him her only son as soon as he was able to wield a sword and lance. He intended to repay Heinz for the love and loyalty his father had shown him through his whole life.

"And the Hapsburg," Biberli added, "had kept his word."

In a few years his young lord was ready for a position at court.

Gotthard von Ramsweg, the Lady Wendula's older brother, a valiant knight, went to his sister's home after her husband's death to manage the estate and instruct his nephew in all the exercises of knighthood. Soon the strong, agile, fearless son of a brave father, under the guidance of such a teacher, excelled many an older youth. He was barely eighteen when the Lady Wendula sent him to his imperial master. She had given him, with her blessing, fiery horses, the finest pieces of his father's suits of mail, an armour bearer, and a groom to take with him on his journey; and his uncle had agreed to accompany him to Lausanne, where the Emperor Rudolph was then holding his court to discuss with Pope Gregory—the tenth of

the name—arrangements for a new crusade. But nothing had yet been said about Biberli. On the evening before the young noble's departure, however, a travelling minstrel came to the castle, who sang of the deeds of former crusaders, and alluded very touchingly to the loneliness of the wounded knight, Herr Weisenthau, on his couch of pain. Then the Lady Wendula remembered her eldest son, and the fraternal tendance which Biberli had given him.

"And so," the servant went on, "in the anxiety of a mother's heart she urged me to accompany Heinz, her darling, as esquire, and watch over his welfare."

"Since I could use a pen, I was to write now and then what a mother desires to hear of a son. She felt great confidence in me, because she believed that I was true and steadfast. And I have kept in every respect the vow I then made to the Lady Wendula—that she should not find herself mistaken in me. I remember that evening as if it were only yesterday. To keep constantly before my eyes the praise my mistress had bestowed upon me, I ventured to ask my young master's sister to embroider the T and the S on the cap and the new coat, and the young lady did so that very night. Since that time these two initials have gone with me wherever our horses bear us, and as, after the battle of Marchfield, Biberli nursed his master back to health with care and toil, he thinks he can

prove to you, his sole sweetheart, that he wears his T and S with good reason."

In return for these words Kätterle granted her friend the fitting reward with such resignation that it was robbing the moon not to permit her to look on. Her curiosity, however, was not to remain wholly ungratified; for when Biberli found that it was time for him to repair to the Town Hall to learn whether his master, Heinz Schorlin, needed his services, Kätterle came out of the house door with him.

They found much more to say and to do ere they parted.

First, the Swiss maid-servant wished to know how the Emperor Rudolph had received Heinz Schorlin; and she had the most gratifying news.

During their stay at Lausanne, where he won the victory in a tournament, Heinz was knighted; but after the battle of Marchfield he became still dearer to the Emperor, especially when a firm friendship united the young Swiss to Hartmann, Rudolph's eighteen-year-old son, who was now on the Rhine. That very day Heinz had received a tangible proof of the imperial favour, on account of which he had gone to the dance in an extremely cheerful mood.

This good news concerning the knight, whom her young mistress had perhaps already met, awakened in the maid, who was not averse to the business of matchmaking, so dear to her sex, very

aspiring plans which aimed at nothing less than a union between Eva and Heinz Schorlin. But Biberli had scarcely perceived the purport of Kätterle's words when he anxiously interrupted her and, declaring that he had already lingered too long, cut short the suggestion by taking leave.

His master's marriage to a young girl who belonged to the city nobility, which in his eyes was far inferior in rank to a Knight Schorlin, should cast no stone in the pathway of fame that was leading him so swiftly upward. Many things must happen before Biberli could honestly advise him to give up his present free and happy life and seek rest in his own nest.

If Eva Ortlieb were as lovely as the Virgin herself, and Sir Heinz's inflammable heart should blaze as fervently as it always did, she should not lure him into the paralysing bondage of wedlock so long as he was there and watched over him.

If he must be married, Biberli had something else in view for him—something which would make him a great lord at a single stroke. But it was too soon even for that.

When he crossed the Fleischbrücke in the market place and approached the brilliantly lighted Town Hall, he had considerable difficulty in moving forward, for the whole square was thronged with curious spectators, servants in gala liveries, sedan chairs, richly caparisoned steeds, and torchbearers. The von Montfort retinue, which had

quarters in the Ortlieb house, was one of the most brilliant and numerous of all, and Biberli's eyes wandered with a look of satisfaction over the gold-mounted sedan chair of the young countess. He would rather have given his master to her than to the Nuremberg maiden whom Kätterle compared to a weathercock, and who therefore certainly did not possess the lofty virtue of steadfastness.

### CHAPTER III.

SIR HEINZ SCHORLIN's servant was on intimate terms with many of the servitors of the imperial family, and one of them conducted him to the balcony of the city pipers, which afforded a view of the great hall. The Emperor sat there at the head of the banquet table, and by his side, on a lower throne, his sister, the Burgravine von Zollern. Only the most distinguished and aristocratic personages whom the Reichstag attracted to Nuremberg, with their ladies, shared the feast given by the city in their honour.

But yonder, at a considerable distance from them, though within the space enclosed by a black and yellow silk cord, separated from the glittering throng of the other guests, he perceived—he would not trust his own eyes—the Knight Heinz Schorlin, and by his side a wonderfully charming young girl.

Biberli had not seen Eva Ortlieb for three years, yet he knew that it was no other than she. But into what a lovely creature the active, angular child with the thin little arms had developed!

The hall certainly did not lack superb women of all ages and every style of figure and bearing suited to please the eye. Many might even boast of more brilliant, aristocratic beauty, but not one could vie in witchery with her on whom Kätterle had cast an eye for his master. She had only begun a modest allusion to it, but even that was vexatious; for Biberli fancied that she had thereby "talked of the devil," and he did not wish him to appear.

With a muttered imprecation, by no means in harmony with his character, he prepared to leave the balcony; but the scene below, though it constantly filled him with fresh vexation, bound him to the spot as if by some mysterious spell.

Especially did he fancy that he had a bitter taste in his mouth when his gaze noted the marvellous symmetry of Heinz Schorlin's powerful though not unusually tall figure, his beautiful waving locks, and the aristocratic ease with which he wore his superb velvet robe—sapphire blue on the left side and white on the right, embroidered with silver falcons—or perceived how graciously the noblest of the company greeted him after the banquet; not, indeed, from envy, but because it pierced his very heart to think that this splendid young favourite of fortune, already so renowned, whom he warmly loved, should throw himself away on the daughter of a city merchant, though his motley

wares, which he had just seen, were adorned by the escutcheon of a noble house.

But Heinz Schorlin had already been attracted by many more aristocratic fair ones, only to weary of them speedily enough. This time, also, Biberli would have relied calmly on his fickleness had Kätterle's foolish wish only remained unuttered, and had Heinz treated his companion in the gay, bold fashion which usually marked his manner to other ladies. But his glance had a modest, almost devout expression when he gazed into the large blue eyes of the merchant's daughter. And now she raised them! It could not fail to bewitch the most obdurate woman hater!

Faithful, steadfast Biberli clenched his fists, and once even thought of shouting "Fire!" into the ballroom below to separate all who were enjoying themselves there wooing and being wooed.

But those beneath perceived neither him nor his wrath—least of all his master and the young girl who had come hither so reluctantly.

At home Eva had really done everything in her power to be permitted to stay away from the Town Hall. Herr Ernst Ortlieb, her father, however, had been inflexible. The chin of the little man with beardless face and hollow cheeks had even begun to tremble, and this was usually the precursor of an outburst of sudden wrath which sometimes overpowered him to such a degree that he committed acts which he afterwards regretted.



This time he had been compelled not to tolerate the opposition of his obstinate child. Emperor Rudolph himself had urged the "honourable" members of the Council to gratify him and his daughter-in-law Agnes, whom he wished to entertain pleasantly during her brief visit, by the presence of their beautiful wives and daughters at the entertainment in the Town Hall.

Herr Ortlieb's invalid wife could not spare Els, her older daughter and faithful nurse, so he required Eva's obedience, and compelled her to give up her opposition to attending the festival; but she dreaded the vain, worldly gaiety—nay, actually felt a horror of it.

Even while still a pupil at the convent school she had often asked herself whether it would not be the fairest fate for her, like her Aunt Kuni-gunde, the abbess of the convent of St. Clare, to vow herself to the Saviour and give up perishable joys to secure the rapture of heaven, which lasted throughout eternity, and might begin even here on earth, in a quiet life with God, a complete realisation of the Saviour's loving nature, and the great sufferings which he took upon himself for love's sake. Oh, even suffering and bleeding with the Most High were rich in mysterious delight! Aye, no earthly happiness could compare with the blissful feeling left by those hours of pious ecstasy.

Often she had sat with closed eyes for a long time, dreaming that she was in the kingdom of

heaven and, herself an angel, dwelt with angels. How often she had wondered whether earthly love could bestow greater joy than such a happy dream, or the walks through the garden and forest, during which the abbess told her of St. Francis of Assisi, who founded her order, the best and most warm-hearted among the successors of Christ, of whom the Pope himself said that he would hear even those whom God would not! Moreover, there was no plant, no flower, no cry of any animal in the woods which was not familiar to the Abbess Kuni-gunde. Like St. Francis, she distinguished in everything which the ear heard and the eye beheld voices that bore witness to the goodness and greatness of the Most High. The abbess felt bound by ties of sisterly affection to every one of God's creatures, and taught Eva to love them, too, and, as a person who treats a child kindly wins the mother's heart also, to obtain by love of his creatures that of the Creator.

Others had blamed her because she held aloof from her sister's friends and amusements. They were ignorant of the joys of solitude, which her aunt and her saint had taught her to know.

She had endured interruptions and reproaches, often humbly, oftener still, when her hot blood swept away her self-control, with vehement indignation and tears; but meanwhile she had always cherished the secret thought that the time would come when she, too, would be permitted, at one

with God and the Saviour, to enjoy the raptures of eternal bliss. She loved her invalid mother and, often as his sudden fits of passion alarmed her, she was tenderly attached to her father; yet it would have seemed to her an exquisite delight to be permitted to imitate the saints and sever all bonds which united her to the world and its clogging demands. She had long been yearning for the day when she would be allowed to entreat the abbess to grant her admittance to the convent, whose doors would be flung wide open for her because, next to the brothers Ebner, who founded it, her parents had contributed the largest sum for its support.

But she was obliged to wait patiently, for Els, her older sister, would probably soon marry her Wolff, and then it would be her turn to nurse her invalid mother. Her own heart dictated this, and the abbess had said: "Let her enter eternity clasping your hand before you begin, with us, to devote all your strength to securing your own salvation. Besides, you will thereby ascend a long row of steps nearer to your sublime goal."

But Eva would far rather have given her hand now, aloof from the world, to the Most High in an inviolable bond. What marvel that, with such a goal in view, she was deeply reluctant to enter the gay whirl of a noisy ball!

With serious repugnance she had allowed Kätterle and her sister to adorn her, and entered the

sedan chair which was to convey her to the Town Hall. Doubtless her own image, reflected in the mirror, had seemed charming enough, and the loud expressions of delight from the servants and others who admired her rich costume had pleased her; but directly after she realized the vanity of this emotion and, while approaching the ballroom in her chair, she prayed to her saint to help her conquer it.

Striving honestly to vanquish this error, she entered the hall soon after the Emperor and his young daughter-in-law; but there she was greeted from the balcony occupied by the city pipers and musicians, long before Biberli entered it, with the same fanfare that welcomed the illustrious guests of the city, and with which blended the blare of the heralds' trumpets. Thousands of candles in the chandeliers and candelabra diffused a radiance as brilliant as that of day and, confused by the noise and waves of light which surged around her, she had drawn closer to her father, clinging to him for protection. She especially missed her sister, with whom she had grown up, who had become her second self, and whom she needed most when she emerged from her quiet life of introspection into the gay world.

At first she had stood with downcast lashes, but soon her eyes wandered over the waving plumes and flashing jewels, the splendour of silk and velvet, the glitter of gold and glimmer of pearls.

Sometimes the display in church had been scarcely less brilliant, and even without her sister's request she had gazed at it, but how entirely different it was! There she had rejoiced in her own modest garb, and told herself that her simplicity was more pleasing to God and the saints than the vain splendour of the others, which she might so easily have imitated or even surpassed. But here the anxious question of how she appeared among the rest of the company forced itself upon her.

True, she knew that the brocade suckenie, which her father had ordered from Milan, was costly; that the sea-green hue of the right side harmonised admirably with the white on the left; that the tendrils and lilies of the valley wrought in silver, which seemed to be scattered over the whole, looked light and airy; yet she could not shake off the feeling that everything she wore was in disorder—here something was pulled awry, there something was crushed. Els, who had attended to her whole toilet, was not there to arrange it, and she felt thoroughly uncomfortable in the midst of this worldly magnificence and bustle.

Notwithstanding her father's presence, she had never been so desolate as among these ladies and gentlemen, nearly all of whom were strangers.

Her sister was intimate with the other girls of her age and station, few of whom were absent, and if Eva could have conjured her to her side doubtless many would have joined them; but she knew

no one well, and though many greeted her, no one lingered. Everybody had friends with whom they were on far more familiar terms. The young Countess von Montfort, a girl of her own age and an inmate of her own home, also gave her only a passing word. But this was agreeable to her—she disliked Cordula's free manners.

Many who were friends of Els had gathered around Ursula Vorchtel, the daughter of the richest man in the city, and she intentionally avoided the Ortliebs because, before Wolff Eysvogel sued for Els's hand, he and Ursula had been intended for each other.

Eva was just secretly vowing that this first ball should also be the last, when the imperial magistrate, Herr Berthold Pfinzing, her godfather, came to present her to the Emperor, who had requested to see the little daughter of the Herr Ernst Ortlieb whose son had fallen in battle for him. His "little saint," Herr Pfinzing added, looked no less lovely amid the gay music of the Nuremberg pipers than kneeling in prayer amid the notes of the organ.

Every tinge of colour had faded from Eva's cheeks, and though a few hours before she had asked her sister what the Emperor's greatness signified in the presence of God that she should be forced, for his sake, to be faithless to the holiest things, now fear of the majesty of the powerful sovereign made her breath come quicker.

How, clinging to her godfather's hand, she reached the Emperor Rudolph's throne she could never describe, for what happened afterwards resembled a confused dream of mingled bliss and pain, from which she was first awakened by her father's warning that the time of departure had come.

When she raised her downcast eyes the monarch was standing before the throne placed for him. She had been compelled to bend her head backward in order to see his face, for his figure, seven feet in height, towered like a statue of Roland above all who surrounded him. But when, after the Austrian duchess, his daughter-in-law, who was scarcely beyond childhood, and the Burgrave von Zollern, his sister, had graciously greeted her, and Eva with modest thanks had also bowed low before the Emperor Rudolph, a smile, spite of her timidity, flitted over her lips, for as she bent the knee her head barely reached above his belt. The Burgravine, a vivacious matron, must have noticed it, for she beckoned to her, and with a few kind words mentioned the name of the young knight who stood behind her, between her own seat and that of the young Duchess Agnes of Austria, and recommended him as an excellent dancer. Heinz Schorlin, the master of the true and steadfast Biberli, had bowed courteously, and answered respectfully that he hoped he should not prove himself unworthy of praise from such lips.

Meanwhile his glance met Eva's, and the Burgravine probably perceived with what ardent admiration the knight's gaze rested on the young Nuremberg beauty, for she had scarcely stepped back after the farewell greeting when the noble lady said in a low tone, but loud enough for Eva's quick ear to catch the words, "Methinks yonder maiden will do well to guard her little heart this evening against you, you unruly fellow! What a sweet, angelic face!"

Eva's cheeks crimsoned with mingled shame and pleasure at such words from such lips, and she would have been only too glad to hear what the knight whispered to the noble lady.

The attention of the young Duchess Agnes, daughter of King Ottocar of Bohemia and wife of the Emperor's third son, who also bore the name of Rudolph, had been claimed during this incident by the Duke of Nassau, who had presented his ladies to her, but they had scarcely retired when she beckoned to Heinz Schorlin, and while talking with him gazed into his eyes with such warm, childlike pleasure that Eva was incensed; she thought it unseemly for a wife and a duchess to be on such familiar terms with a simple knight. Nay, her disapproval of the princess's conduct must have been very deep, for during the whole time of her conversation with the knight there was a loud singing in the young girl's ears. The Bohemian's face might be considered pretty;



her dark eyes sparkled brightly, animating the immature features, now slightly sunburnt; and although four years younger than Eva, her figure, though not above middle height, was well developed and, in spite of its flexibility, aristocratic in bearing. While conversing with Heinz Schorlin she seemed joyously excited, unrestrainedly cordial, but her manner expressed disappointment and royal hauteur as another group of ladies and gentlemen came forward to be presented, compelling her to turn her back upon the young Swiss with a regretful shrug of her shoulders.

The counts and countesses, knights and ladies who thronged around her concealed her from Eva's eyes, who, now that Heinz Schorlin had left the Bohemian, again turned her attention to the Emperor, and even ventured to approach him. What paternal gentleness Rudolph's deep tones expressed! How much his face attracted her!

True, it could make no pretensions to beauty—the thin, hooked nose was far too large and long; the corners of the mouth drooped downward too much; perhaps it was this latter peculiarity which gave the whole face so sorrowful an aspect. Eva thought she knew its source. The wound dealt a few months before by the death of his faithful wife, the love of his youth, still ached. His eyes could not be called either large or bright; but how kindly, how earnest, shrewd and, when an amusing thought passed through his

mind, how mischievous they could look! His light-brown hair had not yet turned very grey, spite of his sixty-three years, but the locks had lost their luxuriance and fell straight, except for a slight curl at the lower ends, below his neck.

Eva's father, when a young man, had met Frederic II, of the Hohenstaufen line, in Italy, and was wont to call this a special boon of fate. True, her aunt, the abbess, said she did not envy him the honour of meeting the Antichrist; yet that very day after mass she had counselled Eva to impress the Emperor Rudolph's appearance on her memory. To meet noble great men elevates our hearts and makes us better, because in their presence we become conscious of our own insignificance and the duty of emulating them. She would willingly have given more than a year of her life to be permitted to gaze into the pure, loving countenance of St. Francis, who had closed his eyes seven years after her birth.

So Eva, who was accustomed to render strict obedience to her honoured aunt, honestly strove to watch every movement of the Emperor; but her attention had been continually diverted, mainly by the young knight, from whom—the Emperor's sister, Burgravine Elizabeth, had said so herself—danger threatened her heart.

But the young Countess Cordula von Montfort, the inmate of her home, also compelled her to gaze after her, for Heinz Schorlin had approached

the vivacious native of the Vorarlberg, and the freedom with which she treated him—allowing herself to go so far as to tap him on the arm with her fan—vexed and offended her like an insult offered to her whole sex. To think that a girl of high station should venture upon such conduct before the eyes of the Emperor and his sister!

Not for the world would she have permitted any man to talk and laugh with her in such a way. But the young knight whom she saw do this was again the Swiss. Yet his bright eyes had just rested upon her with such devout admiration that lack of respect for a lady was certainly not in his nature, and he merely found himself compelled, contrary to his wish, to defend himself against the countess and her audacity.

Eva had already heard much praise of the great valour of the young knight Heinz Schorlin. When Kätterle, whose friend and countryman was in his service, spoke of him—and that happened by no means rarely—she had always called him a devout knight, and that he was so, in truth, he showed her plainly enough; for there was fervent devotion in the eyes which now again sought hers like an humble penitent.

The musicians had just struck up the Polish dance, and probably the knight, whom the Emperor's sister had recommended to her for a partner, wished by this glance to apologise for inviting Countess Cordula von Montfort instead. There-

fore she did not need to avoid the look, and might obey the impulse of her heart to give him a warning in the language of the eyes which, though mute, is yet so easily understood. Hitherto she had been unable to answer him, even by a word, yet she believed that she was destined to become better acquainted, if only to show him that his power, of which the Burgravine had spoken, was baffled when directed against the heart of a pious maiden.

And something must also attract him to her, for while she had the honour of being escorted up and down the hall by one of the handsome sons of the Burgrave von Zollern to the music of the march performed by the city pipers, Heinz Schorlin, it is true, did the same with his lady, but he looked away from her and at Eva whenever she passed him.

Her partner was talkative enough, and his description of the German order which he expected to enter, as his two brothers had already done, would have seemed to her well worthy of attention at any other time, but now she listened with but partial interest.

When the dance was over and Sir Heinz approached, her heart beat so loudly that she fancied her neighbours must hear it; but ere he had spoken a single word old Burgrave Frederick himself greeted her, inquired about her invalid mother, her blithe sister, and her aunt, the

abbess, who in her youth had been the queen of every dance, and asked if she found his son a satisfactory partner.

It was an unusual distinction to be engaged in conversation by this distinguished gentleman, yet Eva would fain have sent him far away, and her replies must have sounded monosyllabic enough; but the sweet shyness that overpowered her so well suited the modest young girl, who had scarcely passed beyond childhood, that he did not leave her until the *Rai* began, and then quitted her with the entreaty that she would remove the cap which had hitherto rendered her invisible, to the injury of knights and gentlemen, and be present at the dance which he should soon give at the castle.

The pleasant old nobleman had scarcely left her when she turned towards the young man who had just approached with the evident intention of leading her to the dance, but he was again standing beside Cordula von Montfort, and a feeling of keen resentment overpowered her.

The young countess was challenging his attention still more boldly, tossing her head back so impetuously that the turban-like roll on her hair, spite of the broad ribbon that fastened it under her chin, almost fell on the floor. But her advances not only produced no effect, but seemed to annoy the knight. What charm could he find in a girl who, in a costume which displayed the great-

est extreme of fashion, resembled a Turk rather than a Christian woman? True, she had an aristocratic bearing, and perhaps Els was right in saying that her strongly marked features revealed a certain degree of kindliness, but she wholly lacked the spell of feminine modesty. Her pleasant grey eyes and full red lips seemed created only for laughter, and the plump outlines of her figure were better suited to a matron than a maiden in her early girlhood. Not the slightest defect escaped Eva during this inspection. Meanwhile she remembered her own image in the mirror, and a smile of satisfaction hovered round her red lips.

Now the knight bowed.

Was he inviting the countess to dance again? No, he turned his back to her and approached Eva, whose lovely, childlike face brightened as if a sunbeam had shone upon it. The possibility of refusing her hand for the *Rai* never entered her head, but he told her voluntarily that he had invited Countess Cordula for the Polish dance solely in consequence of the Burgravine's command, but now that he was permitted to linger at her side he meant to make up for lost time.

He kept his word, and was by no means content with the *Rai*; for, after the young Duchess Agnes had summoned him to a *Zduner*, and during its continuance again talked with him far more confidentially than the modest Nuremberg maiden could approve, he persuaded Eva to try the

*Schwäbeln* with him also; and though she had always disliked such dances she yielded, and her natural grace, as well as her quick ear for time, helped her to catch the unfamiliar steps without difficulty. While doing so he whispered that even the angels in heaven could have no greater bliss than it afforded him to float thus through the hall, clasping her in his arm, while she glanced up at him with a happy look and bent her little head in assent. She would gladly have exclaimed warmly: "Yes, indeed! Yet the Burgravine says that danger threatens me from you, you dear, kind fellow, and I should do well to avoid you."

Besides, she felt indebted to him. What would have befallen her here in his absence! Moreover, it gave her a strange sense of pleasure to gaze into his eyes, allow herself to be borne through the wide hall by his strong arm, and while pressed closely to his side imagine that his swiftly throbbing heart felt the pulsing of her own. Instead of injuring her, wishing her evil, and asking her to do anything wrong, he certainly had only good intentions. He had cared for her as if he occupied the place of her own brother who fell in the battle of Marchfield. It would have given him most pleasure—he had said so himself—to dance everything with her, but decorum and the royal dames who kept him in attendance would not permit it. However, he came to her in every pause to exchange at least a few brief words and a glance. During the longest one,

which lasted more than an hour and was devoted to the refreshment of the guests, he led her into a side room which had been transformed into a blossoming garden.

Seats were placed behind the green birch trees—amid whose boughs hung gay lamps—and the rose bushes which surrounded a fountain of perfumed water, and Eva had already followed the Swiss knight across the threshold when she saw among the branches at the end of the room the Countess Cordula, at whose feet several young nobles knelt or reclined, among them Seitz Siebenburg, the brother-in-law of Wolff Eysvogel, her sister's betrothed bridegroom.

The manner of the husband and father whose wife, only six weeks before, had become the mother of twin babies—beautiful boys—and who for Cordula's sake so shamefully forgot his duties, crimsoned her cheeks with a flush of anger, while the half-disapproving, half-troubled look that Sir Boemund Altrosen cast, sometimes at the countess, sometimes at Siebenburg, showed her that she herself was on the eve of doing something which the best persons could not approve; for Altrosen, who leaned silently against the wall beside the countess, ever and anon pushing back the coal-black hair from his pale face, had been mentioned by her godfather as the noblest of the younger knights gathered in Nuremberg. A voice in her own heart too, cried out that this was no fitting place for her



If Els had been with her, Eva said to herself, she certainly would not have permitted her to enter this room, where such careless mirth prevailed, alone with a knight, and the thought roused her for a short time from the joyous intoxication in which she had hitherto revelled, and awakened a suspicion that there might be peril in trusting herself to Heinz Schorlin without reserve.

"Not here," she entreated, and he instantly obeyed her wish, though the Countess Cordula, as if he were alone, instead of with a lady, loudly and gaily bade him stay where pleasure had built a hut under roses.

Eva was pleased that her new friend did not even vouchsafe the young countess an answer. His obedience led her also to believe that her anxiety had been in vain. Yet she imposed greater reserve of manner upon herself so rigidly that Heinz noticed it, and asked what cloud had dimmed the pure radiance of her gracious sunshine.

Eva lowered her eyes and answered gently: "You ought not to have taken me where the diffidence due to modesty is forgotten." Heinz Schorlin understood her and rejoiced to hear the answer. In his eyes, also, Countess Cordula this evening had exceeded the limits even of the liberty which by common consent she was permitted above others. He believed that he had found in Eva the embodiment of pure and beautiful womanhood.

He had given her his heart from the first moment that their eyes met. To find her in every respect exactly what he had imagined, ere he heard a single word from her lips, enhanced the pleasure he felt to the deepest happiness which he had ever experienced.

He had already been fired with a fleeting fancy for many a maiden, but not one had appeared to him, even in a remote degree, so lovable as this graceful young creature who trusted him with such childlike confidence, and whose innocent security by the side of the dreaded heart-breaker touched him.

Never before had it entered his mind concerning any girl to ask himself the question how she would please his mother at home. The thought that she whom he so deeply honoured might possess a magic mirror which showed her her reckless son as he dallied with the complaisant beauties whose graciousness, next to dice-playing, most inflamed his blood, had sometimes disturbed his peace of mind when Biberli suggested it. But when Eva looked joyously up at him with the credulous confidence of a trusting child, he could imagine no greater bliss than to hear his mother, clasping the lovely creature in her arms, call her her dear little daughter.

His reckless nature was subdued, and an emotion of tenderness which he had never experienced before thrilled him as she whispered, "Take me to

a place where everybody can see us, but where we need not notice anyone else."

How significant was that little word "we"! It showed that already she united herself and him in her thoughts. To her pure nature nothing could be acceptable which must be concealed from the light of the sun and the eyes of man. And her wish could be fulfilled.

The place where Biberli had discovered them, and where refreshments had just been served to the Emperor and the ladies and gentlemen nearest to his person, who had been joined by several princes of the Church, was shut off by the banerets, thus preventing the entrance of any uninvited person; but Heinz Schorlin belonged to the sovereign's suite and had admittance everywhere.

So he led Eva behind the black and yellow rope to two vacant chairs at the end of the enclosed space where the banquet had been swiftly arranged for the Emperor and the other illustrious guests of Nuremberg.

These seats were in view of the whole company, yet it would have been as difficult to interrupt him and his lady as any of the table companions of the imperial pair. Eva followed the knight without anxiety, and took her place beside him in the well-chosen seat.

A young cup-bearer of noble birth, with whom Heinz was well acquainted, brought unasked to him and his companion sparkling Malvoisie in

Venetian glasses, and Heinz began the conversation by inviting Eva to drink to the many days brightened by her favour which, if the saints heard his prayer, should follow this, the most delightful evening of his life. He omitted to ask her to pour the wine for him, knowing that many of the guests in the ballroom were watching them; besides the saucy little count came again and again to fill his goblet, and he wished to avoid everything which might elicit sarcastic comment. The young cup-bearer desisted as soon as he noticed the respectful reserve with which Heinz treated his lady, and the youth was soon obliged to leave the hall with his liege lord, Duke Rudolph of Austria, who was to set out for Carinthia early the following morning, and withdrew with his wife without sharing the banquet. The latter accompanied her husband to the castle, but she was to remain in Nuremberg during the session of the Reichstag with the lonely widowed Emperor, who was especially fond of the young Bohemian princess. Before and during the dance with Heinz the latter had requested him to use the noble Arabian steed, a gift from the Sultan Kalaun to the Emperor, who had bestowed it upon her, and also expressed the hope of meeting the knight frequently.

In the conversation which Heinz began with Eva he was at first obliged to defend himself, for she had admitted that she had heard the Burgravine's warning to beware of him.

At the same time she had found opportunity to tell him that her heart yearned for something different from worldly love, and that she felt safe from every one because St. Clare was constantly watching over her.

He replied that he had been reared in piety, that he knew the close relations existing between her patron saint and the holy Francis of Assisi, and that he, too, had experienced many things from this man of God. Eva, with warm interest, asked when and where, and he willingly told her.

On the way from Augsburg to Nuremberg, while riding in advance of the imperial court, he had met an old barefooted man who, exhausted by the heat of the day, had sunk down by the side of the road as if lifeless, with his head resting against the trunk of a tree. Moved with compassion, he dismounted, to try to do something for the grey-beard. A few sips of wine had restored him to consciousness, but his weary, wounded feet would carry him no farther. Yet it would have grieved the old man sorely to be forced to interrupt his journey, for the Chapter General in Portiuncula, in Italy, had sent him with an important message to the brothers of his order in Germany, and especially in Nuremberg.

The old Minorite monk was especially dignified in aspect, and when he chanced to mention that he had known St. Francis well and was one of those who had nursed him during his last illness, a dis-

pute had arisen between Heinz Schorlin, the armor bearer, and his servant Walther Biberli, for each desired to give up his saddle to the old man and pursue his journey on foot for his sake and the praise of God.

But the Minorite could not be persuaded to break his vow never again to mount a knight's charger and, even had it not been evident from his words, Heinz asserted that the aristocratic dignity of his bearing would have shown that he belonged to a noble race.

Biberli's eloquence gained the victory in this case also, and though the groom led by the bridle another young stallion which the ex-schoolmaster might have mounted, he had walked cheerily beside the old monk, sweeping up the dust with his long robe. At the tavern the knight and his attendants had been abundantly repaid for their kindness to the Minorite, for his conversation was both entertaining and edifying; and Heinz repeated to his lady, who listened attentively, much that the monk had related about St. Francis.

Eva, too, was also on the ground dearest and most familiar to her. Her little tongue ran fast enough, and her large blue eyes sparkled with an unusually bright and happy lustre as she completed and corrected what the young knight told her about the saint.

How much that was lovable, benevolent, and wonderful there was to relate concerning this

prophet of peace and good-will, this apostle of poverty and toil who, in every movement of nature, perceived and felt a summons to recognise the omnipotence and goodness of God, an invitation to devout submission to the Most High!

How many amusing, yet edifying and touching anecdotes, the Abbess Kunigunde had narrated of him and the most beloved of his followers! Much of this conversation Eva repeated to the knight, and her pleasure in the subject of the conversation increased the vivacity of her active mind, and soon led her to talk with eager eloquence. Heinz Schorlin fairly hung on her lips, and his eyes, which betrayed how deeply all that he was hearing moved him, rested on hers until a flourish of trumpets announced that the interval between the dances was over.

He had listened in delight and, he felt, was forever bound to her. When duty summoned him to attend the Emperor he asked himself whether such a conversation had ever been held in the midst of a merry dance; whether God, in his goodness, had ever created a being so perfect in soul and body as this fair saint, who could transform a ballroom into a church.

Aye, Eva had done so; for, ardent as was the knight's love, something akin to religious devotion blended with his yearning desire. The last words which he addressed to her before leading her back

to the others contained the promise to make her patron saint, St. Clare, his own.

The Princess of Nassau had invited him for the next dance, but she found Heinz Schorlin, whom the young Duchess Agnes had just said was merry enough to bring the dead to life, a very quiet partner; while young Herr Schürstab, who danced with Eva and, like all the members of the Honourable Council, knew that she desired to take the veil, afterwards told his friends that the younger beautiful E would suit a Carthusian convent, where speech is prohibited, much better than a ballroom.

But after this "*Zäuner*" Heinz Schorlin again loosed her tongue. When he had told her how he came to the court, and she had learned that he had joined the Emperor Rudolph at Lausanne just as he took the vow to take part in the crusade, there was no end to her questions concerning the reason that the German army had not already marched against the infidels, and whether he himself did not long to make them feel his sword.

Then she asked still further particulars concerning Brother Benedictus, the old Minorite whom he had treated so kindly. Heinz told her what he knew, and when he at last enquired whether she still regretted having met him whom she feared, she gazed frankly into his eyes and, smiling faintly, shook her head.

This increased his ardour, and he warmly entreated her to tell him where he could meet her



again, and permit him to call her his lady. But she hesitated to reply, and ere he could win from her even the faintest shadow of consent, Ernst Ortlieb, who had been talking with other members of the council in the room where the wine was served, interrupted him to take his daughter home.

She went reluctantly. The clasp of the knight's hand was felt all the way to the house, and it would have been impossible and certainly ungracious not to return it.

Heinz Schorlin had obtained no assent, yet the last glance from her eyes had been more eloquent than many a verbal promise, and he gazed after her enraptured.

It seemed like desecration to give the hand in which hers had rested to lead any one else to the dance, and when the rotund Duke of Pomerania invited him to a drinking bout at his quarters at the Green Shield he accepted; for without Eva the hall seemed deserted, the light robbed of its brilliancy, and the gay music transformed to a melancholy dirge.

But when at the Green Shield the ducal wine sparkled in the beakers, the gold shone and glistened on the tables, and the rattle of the dice invited the bystanders to the game, he thought that whatever he undertook on such a day of good fortune must have a lucky end.

The Emperor had filled his purse again, but the friendly gift did not cover his debts, and he wanted

to be rid of them before he told his mother that he had found a dear, devout daughter for her, and intended to return home to settle in the ancestral castle, his heritage, and share with his uncle the maintenance of his rights and the management of fields and forests.

Besides, he must test for the first time the power of his new patroness, St. Clare, instead of his old one, St. Leodegar. But the former served him ill enough—she denied him her aid, at any rate in gambling. The full purse was drained to its last *zecchin* only too soon, and Heinz, laughing, turned it inside out before the eyes of his comrades. But though the kind-hearted Duke of Pomerania, with whom Heinz was a special favourite, pushed a little heap of gold towards him with his fat hands, that the Swiss might try his luck again with borrowed money, which brings good fortune, he remained steadfast for Eva's sake.

On his way to the Green Shield he had confessed to Biberli—who, torch in hand, led the way—that he intended very shortly to turn his back on the court and ride home, because this time he had found the right chatelaine for his castle.

"That means the last one," the ex-schoolmaster answered quietly, carefully avoiding fanning the flame of his young master's desire by contradiction. Only he could not refrain from entreating him not to burn his fingers with the dice, and, to confirm it, added that luck in gambling was apt

to be scanty where fortune was so lavish in the gifts of love.

Heinz now remembered this warning. It had been predicted to his darling that meeting him would bring her misfortune, but he was animated by the sincere determination to force the jewel of his heart to remember Heinz Schorlin with anything but sorrow and regret.

What would have seemed impossible to him a few hours before, he now realised. With a steady hand he pushed back the gold to the duke, who pressed it upon him with friendly glances from his kind little eyes and an urgent whispered entreaty, and took his leave, saying that to-night the dice and he were at odds!

With these words he left the room, though the host tried to detain him almost by force, and the guests also earnestly endeavoured to keep the pleasant, jovial fellow. The loss, over which Biberli shook his head angrily, did not trouble him. Even on his couch Heinz found but a short time to think of his empty purse and the lovely maid who was to make the old castle among his beloved Swiss mountains an earthly paradise, for sleep soon closed his eyes.

The next morning the events of the evening seemed like a dream. Would that they had been one! Only he would not have missed, at any cost, the sweet memories associated with Eva. But could she really become his own? He feared not;

for the higher the sun rose the more impracticable his intentions of the night before appeared. At last he even thought of the religious conversation in the dancing hall with a superior smile, as if it had been carried on by some one else. The resolve to ask from her father the hand of the girl he loved he now rejected. No, he was not yet fit for a husband and the quiet life in the old castle. Yet Eva should be the lady of his heart, her patron saint should be his, and he would never sue for the love of any other maiden. Hers he must secure. To press even one kiss on her scarlet lips seemed to him worth the risk of life. When he had stilled this fervent longing he could ride with her colour on helm and shield from tourney to tourney, and break a lance for her in every land through which he passed with the Emperor. What would happen afterwards let the saints decide. As usual, Biberli was his confidant, and declared himself ready to use Kätterle's services in his master's behalf.

He had his own designs in doing this. He could rely upon the waiting maid's assistance, and if there were secret meetings between Eva Ortlieb and his lord, which would appease the knight's ardour, even in a small degree, the task of disgusting Heinz with his luckless idea of an early marriage would not prove too difficult.

## CHAPTER IV.

EVA ORTLIEB had been borne home from the ball in her sedan chair with a happy smile hovering round her fresh young lips.

It still lingered there when she found her sister in their chamber, sitting at the spinning wheel. She had not left her suffering mother until her eyes closed in slumber, and was now waiting for Eva, to hear whether the entertainment had proved less disagreeable than she feared, and—as she had sent her maid to bed—to help her undress.

One glance at Eva told her that she had perhaps left the ballroom even more reluctantly than she entered it; but when Els questioned her so affectionately, and with maternal care began to unfasten the ribbon which tied her cap, the young girl, who in the sedan chair had determined to confess to no one on earth what so deeply moved her heart, could not resist the impulse to clasp her in her arms and kiss her with impetuous warmth.

Els received the caress with surprise for, though both girls loved each other tenderly, they,

like most sisters, rarely expressed it by tangible proofs of tenderness. Not until Eva released her did Els exclaim in merry amazement: "So it was delightful, my darling?"

"Oh, *so* delightful!" Eva protested with hands uplifted, and at the same time met her sister's eyes with a radiant glance.

Yet the thought entered her mind that it ill beseemed her to express so much pleasure in a worldly amusement. Her glance fell in shame, and she gently continued in that tone of self-compassion which was by no means unfamiliar to the members of her family. "True, though the Emperor is so noble, and both he and the Burgravine were so gracious to me, at first—and not only for a brief quarter of an hour, but a very long time—I could feel no real pleasure. What am I saying? Pleasure! I was indescribably desolate and alone among all those vain, bedizened strangers. I was like a shipwrecked sailor washed ashore by the waves and surrounded by people whose language is unfamiliar."

"But half Nuremberg was at the ball," her sister interrupted. "Now you see the trouble, darling. Whoever, like you, remains in seclusion and mounts a tall tree to be entirely alone, will be deserted; for who would be kind-hearted enough to learn to climb for your sake? But it seems that afterwards one and another——"

"Oh!" Eva interrupted, "if you think that

any of your friends gave me more than a passing greeting, you are mistaken. Not even Barbel, Ann, or Metz took any special notice of your sister. They kept near Ursel Vorchtel, and she and her brother Ulrich, of course, behaved as if I wore a fern cap and had become invisible. I cannot tell you how uncomfortable I felt, and then—yes, Els, then I first realised distinctly what you are to me. Obstinate as I often am, in spite of all your kindness and care, ungraciously as I often treat you, to-night I clearly perceived that we belong together, like a pair of eyes, and that without you I am only half myself—or, at any rate—not complete. And—as we are speaking in images—I felt like a sapling whose prop has been removed; even your Wolff can never have longed for you more ardently. My father found little time to give me. As soon as he saw me take my place in the Polish dance he went with Uncle Pfinzing to the drinking room, and I did not see him again till he came to bring me home. He had asked Frau Nützel to look after me, but her Kathrin was taken ill, as I heard when we were leaving, and she disappeared with her during the first dance. So I moved forlornly here and there until he—Heinz Schorlin—came and took charge of me.”

“He? Sir Heinz Schorlin?” asked Els in surprise, a look of anxious suspense clouding her pretty, frank face. “The reckless Swiss, whom Countess Cordula said yesterday was the pike in

the dull carp pond of the court, and the only person for whom it was worth while to bear the penance imposed in the confessional?"

"Cordula von Montfort!" cried Eva scornfully. "If she speaks to me I shall not answer her, I can tell you. My cheeks crimson when I think of the liberty——"

"Never mind her," said her sister soothingly. "She is a motherless child, and therefore unlike us. As for Heinz Schorlin, he is certainly a gallant knight; but, my innocent lambkin, he is a wolf nevertheless."

"A wolf?" asked Eva, opening her large eyes as wide as if they beheld some terrible object. But she soon laughed softly, and added quietly: "But a very harmless wolf, who humbly changes his nature when the right hand strokes him. How you stare at me! I am not thinking of your beloved Wolff, whom you have tamed tolerably well, but the wolf of Gubbio, which did so much mischief, and to which St. Francis went forth, accosted him as Brother Wolf, and reminded him that they both owed their lives to the goodness of the same divine Father. The animal seemed to understand this, for it nodded to him. The saint now made a bargain with the wolf, which gave him its paw in pledge of the oath; and it kept the promise, for it followed St. Francis into the city, and never again harmed anyone. The citizens of Gubbio fed the good beast, and when it died sincerely mourned



it. If you wish to know from whom I heard this edifying story—which is true, and can be confirmed by some one now in Nuremberg who witnessed it—let me tell you that it was the wicked wolf himself; not the Gubbio one, but he from Switzerland. An old Minorite monk, to whom he compassionately gave his horse, is the witness I mentioned. At the tavern the priest told him what he had beheld with his own eyes. Do you still inveigh against the dangerous beast, which acts like the good Samaritan, and finds nothing more delightful than hearing or speaking of our dear saint?"

"And this in the Town Hall during the dance?" asked Els, clasping her hands as if she had heard something unprecedented.

Eva, fairly radiant with joy, nodded assent; and Els heard the ring of pleasure in her clear voice, too, as she exclaimed: "That was just what made the ball so delightful. The dancing! Oh, yes, it is easy enough to walk and turn in time to the music when one has such a knight for a partner; but that was by no means the pleasantest part of it. During the interval—it seemed but an instant, yet it really lasted a considerable time—we first entered into conversation."

"In one of the side rooms?" asked Els, the bright colour fading from her cheeks.

"What are you thinking of?" replied Eva in a tone of offence. "I believe I know what is seemly as well as anybody else. True, your Countess

Cordula did not set the most praiseworthy example. She allowed the whole throng of knights to surround her in the ante-room, and your future brother-in-law, Siebenburg, outdid them all. We—Heinz Schorlin and I—sat near the Emperor's table in the great hall, where everybody could see us. There the conversation naturally passed from the old Minorite to the holy founder of his order, and remained there. And if ever valiant knight possessed a devout mind, it is Heinz Schorlin. 'Whoever goes into battle without relying upon God and his saints,' he said, 'will find his courage lack wings, and his armour the surest defensive weapon.' "

"In the ballroom!" again fell from her sister's lips in the same tone of amazement.

"Where else?" asked Eva angrily. "I never met him except there. What do you other girls talk about at such entertainments, if it surprises you? Besides, St. Francis was by no means our only subject; we spoke of the future crusade, too. And oh!—you may believe me—we would have been glad to talk of such things for hours. He knew many things about our saint; but the precise one which makes him especially great and lovable, and withal so powerful that he attracted all whom he deemed worthy to follow him, he had not understood, and I was permitted to be the first person to bring it clearly before his mind. Ah! and his wit is as keen as his sword, and his heart is

as open to all that is noble and sacred as it is loyal to his lord and Emperor. If we meet again I shall win him for the white cross on the black mantle and the battle against the enemies of the faith."

"But, Eva," interrupted her sister, still under the spell of astonishment, "such conversation amid the merry music of the pipers!"

"'Wherever three Christians meet, even though they are only laymen, there is a church,' says Tertullian," Eva answered impressively. "One need not go to the house of God to talk about the things which ought to be the highest and dearest to every one; and Heinz Schorlin—I know it from his own lips—is of the same opinion, for he told me voluntarily that he would never forget the few hours which we had enjoyed together."

"Indeed!" said her sister thoughtfully. "But whether he does not owe this pleasure more to the dancing than to the edifying conversation——"

"Certainly not!" replied Eva, very positively. "I can prove it, too; for later, after he had heard many things about St. Clare, the female counterpart of Francis, he vowed to make her his patron saint. Or do you suppose that a knight changes his saints, as he does his doublet and coat of mail, without having any great and powerful motive? Do you think it possible that the idle pleasure of the dance led him to so important a decision?"

"Certainly not. Nothing led him to it except the irresistible zeal of my devout sister," answered

Els, smiling, as she continued to comb her fair hair. "She spoke with tongues in the ballroom, as the apostles did at Pentecost, and thus our 'little saint' performed her first miracle: the conversion of a godless knight during the dancing."

"Call it so, if you choose," replied Eva, her red lips pouting scornfully, as if she felt raised above such pitiful derision. "How you hurt, Els! You are pulling all the hair out of my head!"

The object of this rebuke had used the comb with the utmost care, but the great luxuriance of the long, fair, waving locks had presented many an impediment, and Eva seemed unusually sensitive that night. Els thought she knew why, and made no answer to the unjust charge. She knew her sister; and as she wound the braids about her head, and then, in the maid's place, hung part of her finery on hooks, and laid part carefully in the chest, she asked her numerous questions about the dance, but was vouchsafed only monosyllabic replies.

At last Els knelt before the *prie-dieu*. Eva did the same, resting her head so long upon her clasped hands that the patient older sister could not wait for the "Amen," but, in order not to disturb Eva's devotion, only pressed a light kiss upon her head and then carefully drew the curtains closely over the windows which, instead of glass, contained oiled parchment.

Eva's excitement filled her with anxiety. She

knew, too, what a powerful influence the bright moonlight sometimes exerted upon her while she slept, and cast another glance at the closely curtained window before she went to her own bed. There she lay a long time, with eyes wide open, pondering over her sister's words, and in doing so perceived more and more clearly that love was now knocking at the heart of the child kneeling before the *prie-dieu*. Sir Heinz Schorlin, the wild butterfly, desired to sip the honey from this sweet, untouched flower, and then probably abandon her like so many before her. Love and anxiety made the girl, whose opinion was usually milder than her sister's, a stern and unwise judge, for she assumed that the Swiss—whose character in reality was far removed from base hypocrisy—the man whom she had just termed a wolf, had donned sheep's clothing to make her poor lambkin an easier prey. But she was on guard and ready to spoil his game.

Did Eva really fail to understand the new feeling which had seized her so swiftly and powerfully? Did she lull herself in the delusion that she cared only for the welfare of the soul of the pious young knight?

Yes, it might be so, and prudent Els, who had watched her own little world intently enough, said to herself that it would be pouring oil upon the flames to tease Eva about the defeat which she, the "little saint," had sustained in the battle against

the demands of the world and of the feminine heart. Besides, her sister was too dear for her to rejoice in her humiliation. Els resolved not to utter a word about the Swiss unless compelled to do so.

Eva's prayers before retiring were often very long, but to-night it seemed as if they would never end.

"She is not appealing to St. Clare for herself alone, but for another," thought Els. "I spend less time in doing it. True, a Heinz Schorlin needs longer intercession than my Eva, my Wolff, and my poor pious mother. But I won't disturb her yet."

Sighing faintly, she changed her position, but remained sitting propped against the white pillows in order not to allow herself to be overcome by sleep. But it was a hard struggle, and her lids often fell, her head drooped upon her breast.

Dawn was already glimmering without when the suppliant at last rose and sought her couch. Her sister let her lie quietly for a while, then she rose and put out the lamp which Eva had forgotten to extinguish. The latter noticed it, turned her face towards her and called her gently. "To think that you should have to get up again, my poor Els! Give me a good-night kiss."

"Gladly, dearest," replied the other. "But it is really quite time to say 'good-morning.'"

"And you have kept awake so long!" replied Eva compassionately, as she threw her arms grate-

fully around her sister's neck, kissed her tenderly, and then pressed her hot cheek to hers.

"What is this?" cried Els, with sincere anxiety. "Are you hurt, child? Surely you are weeping?"

"No, no," was the reply. "I am only—I only thought that I had adorned myself, decked myself out with idle finery, although I know how many poor people are starving in want and misery, and how much more pleasing in the sight of the Lord is the grey robe of the cloistered nun. I could scarcely leave the hall in my overweening pleasure, and yet it would have seemed me far better to share the sufferings of the crucified Saviour."

"But, child," replied Els, striving to soothe her sister, "how often I have heard from you and our aunt, the abbess, that no one was so cheerful and so glad to witness the enjoyment of human beings and animals as your St. Francis!"

"He—he!" groaned Eva, "he who attained the highest goal, who heard the voice of the Lord wherever he listened; he who chose poverty as his beloved bride, who scorned show and parade and the trappings of wealth, as he disdained earthly love; he who celebrated in song the love of the soul glowing for the highest things, as no troubadour could do—oh, how ardently he knew how to love, but to love the things which do not belong to this world!"

Els longed to ask what Eva knew about the ardent fire of love; but she restrained herself,

darkened the bed as well as she could with the movable curtain which hung from the ceiling on both sides above the double couch, and said: "Be sensible, child, and put aside such thoughts. How loudly the birds are twittering outside! If our father is obliged to breakfast alone there may be a storm, and I should be glad to have an hour's nap. You need slumber, too. Dancing is tiresome. Shut your eyes and sleep as long as you can. I'll be as quiet as a mouse while I am dressing."

As she spoke she turned away from her sister and no longer resisted the sleep which soon closed her weary eyes.



## CHAPTER V.

As her father had ordered the servants not to disturb the young girls, Els did not wake till the sun was high in the heavens. Eva's place at her side was empty. She had already left the room. For the first time it had been impossible to sleep even a few short moments, and when she heard from the neighbouring cloister the ringing of the little bell that summoned the nuns to prayers, she could stay in bed no longer.

Usually she liked to dress slowly, thinking meanwhile of many things which stirred her soul. Sometimes while the maid or Els braided her hair she could read a book of devotion which the abbess had given her. But this morning she had carried the clothes she needed into the next room on tiptoe, that she might not wake her sister, and urged Kätterle, who helped her dress, to hurry.

She longed to see her aunt at the convent. While kneeling at the *prie-dieu*, she had reached the certainty that her patron saint had led Heinz Schorlin to her. He was her knight and she his lady, so he must render her obedience, and she would use it

to estrange him from the vanity of the world and make him a champion of the holy cause of the Church of Christ, the victorious conqueror of her foes. Sky-blue, the Holy Virgin's colour, should be hers, and thus his also, and every victory gained by the knight with the sky-blue on his helmet, under St. Clare's protection, would then be hers.

Heinz Schorlin was already one of the boldest and strongest knights; her love must render him also one of the most godly. Yes, her love! If St. Francis had not disdained to make a wolf his brother, why might she not feel herself the loving sister of a youth who would obey her as a noble falcon did his mistress, and whom she would teach to pursue the right quarry? The abbess would not forbid such love, and the impulse that drew her so strongly to the convent was the longing to know how her aunt would receive her confession.

The night before when, after her conversation with Els, she began to pray, she had feared that she had fallen into the snare of earthly love, and dreaded the confession which she had to make to her aunt Kunigunde. Now she found that it was no fleshly bond which united her to the knight. Oh, no! As St. Francis had gone forth to console, to win souls for the Lord, to bring peace and exhort to earnest labour in the service of the Saviour, as his disciples had imitated him, and St. Clare had been untiring in working, in his spirit, among women, she, too, would obey the call which had

come to her saint in Portiuncula, and prove herself for the first time, according to the Scripture, "a fisher of souls."

Now she gladly anticipated the meeting; for though her sister did not understand her, the abbess must know how to sympathise with what was passing in her mind. This expectation was fulfilled; for as soon as she was alone with her aunt she poured forth all her hopes and feelings without reserve, eagerly and joyfully extolling her good fortune that, through St. Clare, she had been enabled to find the noblest and most valiant knight, that she might win him for the Holy War under her saint's protection and to her honour.

The abbess, who knew women's hearts, had at first felt the same fear as Els; but she soon changed her opinion, and thought that she might be permitted to rejoice over the new emotion in her darling's breast.

No girl in love talked so openly and joyously of the conquest won, least of all would her truthful, excitable niece, whom she had drawn into her own path, speak thus of the man who disturbed her repose. No sensitive girl, unfamiliar with the world and scarcely beyond childhood, would decide with such steadfast firmness, so wholly free from every selfish wish, the future of the man dearest to her heart. No, no! Eva had already attained her new birth, and was not to be compared with other girls. She had already once reached that

ecstatic rapture which followed only a long absorption in God and an active sympathy with the deep human love of the Saviour and the unspeakable sufferings which he had taken upon himself. Little was to be feared from earthly love for one who devoted herself with all the passion of her fervid nature to the divine Bridegroom. Among the many whom Kunigunde received into the convent as novices, she was most certainly "called." If she felt something which resembled love for the young knight—and she made no concealment of it—it was only the result of the sweet joy of winning for the Lord, the faith, and her saint a soul which seemed to her worthy of such grace.

Dear, highly gifted child!

She, the abbess Kunigunde, was willing it should be so, and that Eva should surpass herself. She should prove that genuine piety conquers even the yearning of a quickly throbbing heart.

True, she must keep her eyes open in order to prevent Satan, who is everywhere on the watch, from mingling in a game not wholly free from peril. But, on the other hand, the abbess intended to help her beloved niece to reap the reward of her piety.

It was scarcely to be doubted that Heinz Schorlin was fired with ardent love for Eva; but, for that very reason, he would be ready to yield her obedience, and therefore it was advisable to tell her exactly to what she must persuade him. She

must win him to join the Order of Malta, and if the famous champion of Marchfield performed heroic deeds with the white cross on his black mantle, or in war on his red tunic, he, the Emperor's favourite, would be sure of a high position among the military members of the order.

The young girl listened eagerly, but the elderly abbess herself became excited while encouraging the young future "Sister" to her noble task. The days when, with the inmates of the convent, she had prayed that the Emperor Rudolph might fulfil the Pope's desire, and in a new crusade again wrest the Holy Land from the infidels, came back to her memory, and Heinz Schorlin, guided by the nuns of St. Clare, seemed the man to bring the fulfilment of this old and cherished wish.

It appeared like a leading of the saints and a sign from God that Heinz had been dubbed a knight, and commenced his glorious career at Lausanne while the Emperor Rudolph pledged himself to a new crusade.

She detained Eva so long that dinner was over at the Ortlieb mansion, and her impatient father would have sent for her had not the invalid mother urged him to let her remain.

True, she longed to have a talk with her darling, who for the first time in her life had attended a great entertainment, and doubtless it grieved her to think that Eva did not feel the necessity of pouring out her heart to her own mother rather

than to any one else, and sharing with her all the new emotions which undoubtedly had thrilled it; but she knew her child, and would have considered it selfish to place any obstacle in the pathway to eternal salvation of the elect whom God summoned with so loud a voice. Formerly she would rather have seen the young girl, whose charms were developing into such rare beauty, wedded to some good man; but now she rejoiced in the idea that Eva was summoned to rule over the nuns in the neighbouring cloister some day as abbess, in the place of her sister-in-law Kunigunde. Her own days, she knew, were numbered, but where could her child more surely find the happiness she desired for her than with the beloved sisters of St. Clare, whose home she and her husband had helped to build?

Els had concealed from her parents what she fancied she had discovered, for any anxiety injured the invalid, and no one could anticipate how her irritable father might receive the information of her fear. On the other hand, she could confide her troubles without anxiety to Wolff, her betrothed husband. He was wise, prudent, loved Eva like a sister, and in exchanging thoughts with him she always discovered the right course to pursue; but though she expected him so eagerly and confidently, he did not come.

When, in the afternoon, Eva returned home, her whole manner expressed such firm, cheerful

composure that Els began to hope she might have been mistaken. The undemonstrative yet tender affection with which she met her mother, too, by no means harmonised with her fears.

How lovely the young girl looked as she sat on a low stool at the head of the invalid's couch and, with her mother's emaciated hand clasped in hers, told her all that she had seen and experienced the evening before! To please the beloved sufferer, she dwelt longer on the description of the gracious manner of the Emperor Rudolph and his sister to her and her father, the conversation with which the Burgrave had honoured her, and his son's invitation to dance. Then for the first time she mentioned Heinz Schorlin, whom she had found a godly knight, and finally spoke briefly of the distinguished foreign nobles and ladies whom he had pointed out and named.

All this reminded the mother of former days and, in spite of the warning of watchful Els not to talk too much, she did not cease questioning or recalling the time when she herself attended such festivals, and as one of the fairest maidens received much homage.

'It had been a good day, for it was long since she had enjoyed so much quiet in her own home. The von Montforts, she told Eva, had set off early, with a great train of knights and servants, to ride to Radolzburg, the castle of the Burgrave von Zollern. Her father thought they would probably

have a dance there, for the young sons of the Burgrave would act as hosts.

Eva asked carelessly who rode with Cordula this time to submit to her whims, but Els perceived by her sister's flushed cheeks and the tone of her voice what she desired to know, and answered as if by accident that Sir Heinz Schorlin certainly was not one of her companions, for he had ridden through the Frauenthor that afternoon in the train of the Emperor Rudolph and his Bohemian daughter-in-law.

Twilight was already beginning to gather, and Els could not see whether this news afforded Eva pleasure or annoyance, for her mother had taken too little heed of her weakness, and one of the attacks which the physician so urgently ordered her to avoid by caution commenced.

Els and the convent Sister Renata, who helped her nurse the invalid, were now completely absorbed in caring for her, but Eva turned away from the beloved sufferer—her sensitive nature could not endure the sight of her convulsions.

As soon as her mother again lay weak but quiet on the pillows which Els had rearranged for her, Eva obeyed her entreaty to go away, and went to her own chamber. When another attack drew her back to the invalid, a sign from her sister as she reached the threshold bade her keep away from the couch. Should it prove necessary, she whispered, she would call her. If Wolff came, Eva was

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to tell him that she could not leave her mother, but he must be sure to return early the next morning, as she had a great deal to say to him.

Eva then went to her father, who was dressing to attend a banquet at the house of Herr Berthold Vorchtel, the first Losunger \* in the Council, from which he would be loath to absent himself for the very reason that his host's family had been hostile to him ever since the rumour of the betrothal of Wolff Eysvogel, whom the Vorchtels had regarded as their daughter Ursula's future husband.

Nevertheless, Herr Ernst would not have gone to the entertainment had his wife's condition given cause for anxiety. But he was familiar with these convulsions which, it is true, weakened the invalid, but produced no other results; so he permitted Eva to help him put the last touches to his dress, on which he lavished great care. Spick and span as if he were just out of a bandbox, the elderly man, before leaving the house, went once more to the sick-room, and Eva stood near as, after many questions and requests, he whispered something to Els which she did not hear. With excited curiosity she asked what he had said so secretly, but he only answered hurriedly, "The name of the Man in the Moon's dog," kissed her cheek, and ran downstairs.

At the foot he again turned to Eva and told her to send for him if her mother should grow

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\* A title given to the presiding officer of the Council.

worse, for these entertainments at the Vorchtels usually lasted a long time.

"Will the Eysvogels be there too?" asked the girl.

"Who knows," replied her father. "I shall be glad if Wolff comes."

The tone in which he uttered the name of his future son-in-law distinctly showed how little he desired to meet any other member of the family, and Eva said sympathisingly, "Then I hope you will have an opportunity to remember me to Wolff."

"Shall I say nothing to Ursel?" asked the father, pressing a good-night kiss upon the young girl's forehead.

"She would not care for it," was the reply. "It cannot be easy to forget a man like Wolff."

"I wish he had stuck to Ursel, and let Els alone," her father answered angrily. "It would have been better for both."

"Why, father," interrupted Eva reproachfully, "do not our lovers seem really created for each other?"

"If the Eysvogels were only of the same opinion," exclaimed Ernst Ortlieb, shrugging his shoulders with a faint sigh. "Whoever marries, child, weds not only a man or a woman; all their kindred, unhappily, must be taken into the bargain. However, Els did not lack earnest warning. When

your time comes, girl, your father will be more careful."

Smiling tenderly, he passed his hand over the little cap which covered her thick, fair hair, and went out.

Eva returned to her room and sat down at the spinning-wheel in the bow window, where Kätterle had just drawn the curtains closely and lighted the hanging lamp. But the distaff remained untouched, and her thoughts wandered swiftly to the evening before and the ball at the Town Hall. Heinz Schorlin's image rose more and more distinctly before her mind, and this pleased her, for she fancied that he wore on his helm the blue favour which she had chosen, and it led her to consider against what foe she should first send him in the service of his lady and the Holy Church.

## CHAPTER VI.

EVA had gazed into vacancy a long time, and beheld a succession of pleasing pictures, in every one of which Heinz Schorlin appeared. Once, in imagination, she placed a wreath on his helmet after a great victory over the infidels.

Why should not this vision become a reality?

Doubtless it owed its origin to a memory, for Wolff Eysvogel had been fired with love for her sister while Els was winding laurel around his helmet.

After the Honourable Council had resolved that the youths belonging to noble families, who had fought in the battle of Marchfield and returned victorious, should be adorned with wreaths by the maidens of their choice, Fate had appointed her sister to crown Eysvogel.

At that time Wolff had but recently recovered from the severe wounds with which he had returned from the campaign. But while he knelt before Els and his eyes met hers, love had overmastered him so swiftly and powerfully, that at the end of a few days he determined to woo her.

Meanwhile his own family resolutely opposed his choice. The father declared that he had made an agreement with Berthold Vorchtel to marry him to his daughter Ursula, and withdrawal on his son's part would embarrass him. His grandmother, the arrogant old Countess Rotterbach, agreed with him, and declared that Wolff ought to wed no one except a lady of the most aristocratic birth or an heiress like Ursula. Her daughter Rosalinde Eysvogel, as usual, was the echo of her mother.

Herr Ernst Ortlieb, too, would far rather have seen his Els marry into another home; but Wolff himself was a young man of such faultless honour, and the bride he had chosen was so eager to become his, that he deemed it a duty to forget the aversion inspired by the suitor's family.

As for Wolff, he had so firmly persisted in his resolve that his parents at last permitted him to ask for his darling's hand, but his father had made it a condition that the betrothal, on account of the youth of the lovers, should not be announced till after Wolff had returned from Milan, where he was to finish the studies commenced in Venice. True, everyone had supposed that they were completed long ago, but Eysvogel senior insisted upon his demand, and afterwards succeeded in deferring the announcement of the betrothal, until the resolute persistence of Wolff, who meanwhile had entered the great commercial house, and the wish of his own aged mother, a sensible woman, who from

the first had approved her grandson's choice and to whom Herr Casper was obliged to show a certain degree of consideration, compelled him to give it publicity.

A few days later Herr Casper's brother died, and soon after his estimable old mother. He used these events as a pretext for longer delay, saying that both he and his wife needed 'at least six months' interval ere they could forget their mourning in a gay wedding festival. Besides, he would prefer not to have the marriage take place until after Wolff's election to the Council, which, in all probability, would occur after Walpurgis of the coming year.

Ernst Ortlieb had sullenly submitted to all this. Nothing but his love for his child and respect for Herr Casper's dead mother, who had taken Els to her heart like a beloved granddaughter, would have enabled him to conquer his hasty temper in his negotiations with the man whom he detested in his inmost soul, and not hurl back the consent so reluctantly granted to his son.

The friends who knew him admired the strength of will with which he governed his impetuous nature in this transaction. Some asserted that secret obligations compelled him to yield to the rich Eysvogel; for though the Ortlieb mercantile house was reputed wealthy, the business prudence of its head resulted in smaller profits, and people had not forgotten that it had suffered heavy

losses during the terrible period of despotism which had preceded the Emperor Rudolph's accession to the throne.

The insecurity of the high-roads had injured every merchant, but in trying to find some explanation for Herr Ortlieb's submission the attacks which had cost him one and another train of wares were regarded as specially disastrous.

Finally, the dowry which Els was to bring bore no comparison to the large sums Ernst Ortlieb had lavished upon the erection of the St. Clare Convent, and hence it was inferred that the wealth of the firm had sustained considerable losses. This found ready credence, owing to the retired life led by the Ortliebs,—whose house had formerly been one of the most hospitable in the city,—ever since the wife had become an invalid and Eva had grown up with an aversion to the world. Few took the trouble to inquire into the very apparent causes for the change.

Yet this view of the matter was opposed by many—nay, when the conversation turned upon these subjects, Herr Berthold Vorchtel, perhaps the richest and most distinguished man in Nuremberg, who rented the imperial taxes, made comments from which, had it not been so difficult to believe, people might have inferred that Casper Eysvogel was indebted to Ernst Ortlieb rather than the latter to him.

Yet the cautious, prudent man never explained

the foundation of his opinion, for he very rarely mentioned either of the two firms; yet prior to the battle of Marchfield he had believed that his own daughter Ursula and Wolff Eysvogel would sooner or later wed. Herr Casper, the young man's father, had strengthened this expectation. He himself and his wife esteemed Wolff, and his "Ursel" had shown plainly enough that she preferred him to the other friends of her elder brother Ulrich.

When he returned home the two met like brother and sister, and the parents of Ursula Vorchtel had expected Wolff's proposal until the day on which the wreaths were bestowed had made them poorer by a favourite wish and destroyed the fairest hope of their daughter Ursula.

The worthy merchant, it is true, deemed love a beautiful thing, but in Nuremberg it was the parents who chose wives and husbands for their sons and daughters; yet, after marriage, love took possession of the newly wedded pair. A transgression of this ancient custom was very rare, and even though Wolff's heart was fired with love for Els Ortlieb, his father, Herr Vorchtel thought, should have refused his consent to the betrothal, especially as he had already treated Ursel as his future daughter. Some compulsion must have been imposed upon him when he permitted his son to choose a wife other than the one selected.

But what could render one merchant dependent upon another except business obligations?—and



Berthold Vorchtel was sharp-sighted. He knew the heavy draft which Herr Casper had made upon the confidence reposed in the old firm, and thought he had perceived that the great splendour displayed by the women of the Eysvogel family, the liberality with which Herr Casper had aided his impoverished noble relatives, and the lavish expenditure of his son-in-law, the debt-laden Sir Seitz Siebenburg, drew too heavily upon the revenues of the ancient house.

Even now Casper Eysvogel's whole conduct proved how unwelcome was his son's choice. To him, Ursula's father, he still intimated on many an occasion that he had by no means resigned every hope of becoming, through his son, more nearly allied to his family, for a betrothal was not a wedding.

Berthold Vorchtel, however, was not the man to enter into such double-dealing, although he saw plainly enough how matters stood with his poor child. She had confided her feelings to no one; yet, in spite of Ursula's reserved nature, even a stranger could perceive that something clouded her happiness. Besides, she had persistently refused the distinguished suitors who sought the wealthy Herr Berthold's pretty daughter, and only very recently had promised her parents, of her own free will, to give up her opposition to marriage.

Ever since the betrothal, to the sincere sorrow

of Els, she had studiously avoided Wolff's future bride, who had been one of her dearest friends; and Ulrich, Herr Vorchtel's oldest son, took his sister's part, and at every opportunity showed Wolff—who from a child, and also in the battle of Marchfield, had been a favourite comrade—that he bore him a grudge, and considered his betrothal to any one except Ursula an act of shameful perfidy.

The fair-minded father did not approve of his son's conduct, for his wife had learned from her daughter that Wolff had never spoken to her of love, or promised marriage.

Therefore, whenever Herr Berthold Vorchtel met Els's father—and this often happened in the Council—he treated him with marked respect, and when there was an entertainment in his house sent him an invitation, as in former years, which Ernst Ortlieb accepted, unless something of importance prevented.

But though the elder Vorchtel was powerless to change his children's conduct, he never wearied of representing to his son how unjust and dangerous were the attacks with which, on every occasion, he irritated Wolff, whose strength and skill in fencing were almost unequalled in Nuremberg. In fact, the latter would long since have challenged his former friend had he not been so conscious of his own superiority, and shrunk from the thought of bringing fresh sorrow upon Ursula and

her parents, whom he still remembered with friendly regard. .

Eva was fond of her future brother-in-law, and it had not escaped her notice that of late something troubled him.

What was it ?

She thoughtfully gave the wheel a push, and as it turned swiftly she remembered the Swiss dance the evening before, and suddenly clenched her small right hand and dealt the palm of her left a light blow.

She fancied that she had discovered the cause of Wolff's depression, for she again saw distinctly before her his sister Isabella's husband, Sir Seitz Siebenburg, as he swung Countess Cordula around so recklessly that her skirt, adorned with glittering jewels, fluttered far out from her figure. In the room adjacent to the hall he had flung himself upon his knees before the countess, and Eva fancied she again beheld his big, red face, with its long, thick, yellow mustache, whose ends projected on both sides in a fashion worn by few men of his rank. The expression of the watery blue eyes, with which he stared Cordula in the face, were those of a drunkard.

To-day he had followed her to the Kadolzburg, and probably meant to spend the night there. So Wolff had ample reason to be anxious about his sister and her peace of mind. That must be it !

Perhaps he would yet come that evening, to give Els at least a greeting from the street. How late was it?

She hastily tried to draw the curtains aside from the window, but this was not accomplished as quickly as she expected—they had been carefully fastened with pins. Eva noticed it, and suddenly remembered her father's whispered words to Els.

They were undoubtedly about the window. According to the calendar, the moon would be full that day, and she knew very well that it had a strange influence upon her. True, within the past year it appeared to have lost its power; but formerly, especially when she had devoted herself very earnestly to religious exercises, she had often, without knowing how or why, left her bed and wandered about, not only in her chamber but through the house. Once she had climbed to the dovecot in the courtyard, and another time had mounted to the garret where, she did not know in what way, she had been awakened. When she looked around, the moon was shining into the spacious room, and showed her that she was perched on one of the highest beams in the network of rafters which, joined with the utmost skill, supported the roof. Below her yawned a deep gulf, and as she looked down into it she was seized with such terror that she uttered a loud shriek for help, and did not recover her calmness until the

old housekeeper, Martsche, who had started from her bed in alarm, brought her father to her.

She had been taken down with the utmost care. No one was permitted to help except white-haired Nickel, the old head packer, who often let a whole day pass without opening his lips; for Herr Ernst seemed to lay great stress upon keeping the moon's influence on Eva a secret. There was indeed something uncanny about this night-walking, for even now it seemed incomprehensible how she had reached the beam, which was at least the height of three men above the floor. A fall might have cost her life, and her father was right in trying to prevent a repetition of such nocturnal excursions. This time Els had helped him.

How faithfully she cared for them all!

Yes, she had barred out even the faintest glimmer. Eva smiled as she saw the numerous pins with which her sister had fastened the curtain, and an irresistible longing seized her to see once more the wonderful light that promoted the growth of the hair if cut during its increase, and also exerted so strange an influence upon her.

She *must* look up at the moon!

Swiftly and skilfully, as if aided by invisible hands, her dainty fingers opened curtain and window.

Drawing a deep breath, with an emotion of pleasure which she had not experienced for a long time, she gazed at the linden before the house

steeped in silvery radiance, and upward to the pure disk of the full moon sailing in the cloudless sky.

How beautiful and still the night was! How delightful it would be to walk up and down the garden, with her aunt the abbess, with Els, and perhaps—she felt the blood crimson her cheeks—with Heinz Schorlin!

Where was he now?

Undoubtedly with the Emperor and his ladies, perhaps at the side of the Bohemian princess, the young Duchess Agnes, who yesterday had so plainly showed her pleasure in his society.

Just then the watch, marching from the Marienthurn to the Frauenthor, gave her vagrant thoughts a new turn. The city guard was soon followed by a troop of horse, which probably belonged to the Emperor's train.

It was delightful to gaze, at this late hour, into the moonlit street, and she wondered that she had never enjoyed it before. True, it would have been still pleasanter had Els borne her company; and, besides, she longed to tell her the new explanation she had found for Wolff's altered manner.

Perhaps her mother was asleep, and she could come with her.

How still the house was!

Cautiously opening the door of the sick-room, she glanced in. Els was standing at the head of the bed, supporting her mother with her strong young arms, while Sister Renata pushed the cush-

ions between the sufferer's back and the bedstead.

The old difficulty of breathing had evidently attacked her again.

Yes, yes, the dim light of the lamp was shining on her pale face, and the large sunken eyes were gazing with imploring anguish at the image of the Virgin on the opposite wall.

How gladly Eva would have afforded her relief! She looked with a faint sense of envy at her sister, whose skilful, careful hands did everything to the satisfaction of the beloved sufferer, while in nursing she failed only too often in giving the right touch. But she could pray—implore the aid of her saint very fervently; nay, she was more familiar with her, and might hope that she would fulfil a heartfelt wish of hers more quickly than for her sister. It would not do to call Els to the window.

She closed the door gently, returned to her chamber, knelt and implored St. Clare, with all the fervour of her heart, to grant her mother a good night. Then she again drew the curtains closely over the window, and went to call Kätterle to help her undress.

But the maid was just entering with fresh water. What was the matter with her?

Her hand trembled as she braided her young mistress's hair and sometimes, with a faint sigh, she stopped the movement of the comb.

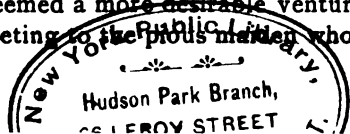
Her silence could be easily explained; for Eva

had often forbidden Kätterle to talk, when she disturbed her meditation. Yet the girl must have had some special burden on her mind, for when Eva had gone to bed she could not resolve to leave the room, but remained standing on the threshold in evident embarrassment.

Eva encouraged her to speak, and Kätterle, so confused that she often hesitated for words and pulled at her ribbons till she was in danger of tearing them from her white apron, stammered that she did not come on her own account, but for another person. It was well known in the household that her betrothed husband, the true and steadfast Walther Biberli, served a godly knight, her countryman.

"I know it," said Eva with apparent composure, "and your Biberli has commissioned you to bear me the respectful greeting of Sir Heinz Schorlin."

The girl looked at her young mistress in surprise. She had been prepared for a sharp rebuke, and had yielded to her lover's entreaties to undertake this service amid tears, and with great anxiety; for if her act should be betrayed, she would lose, amid bitter reproaches, the place she so greatly prized. Yet Biberli's power over her and her faith in him were so great that she would have followed him into a lion's den; and it had scarcely seemed a more desirable venture to carry a love-greeting to the pious maiden who held men





in such disfavour, and could burst into passionate anger as suddenly as her father.

And now ?

Eva had expected such a message.

It seemed like a miracle to Kätterle.

With a sigh of relief, and a hasty thanksgiving to her patron saint, she at once began to praise the virtue and piety of the servant as well as his lord ; but Eva again interrupted, and asked what Sir Heinz Schorlin desired.

Kätterle, with new-born confidence, repeated, as if it were some trivial request, the words Biberli had impressed upon her mind.

“ By virtue of the right of every good and devout knight to ask his lady for her colour, Sir Heinz Schorlin, with all due reverence, humbly prays you to name yours ; for how could he hold up his head before you and all the knights if he were denied the privilege of wearing it in your honour, in war as well as in peace ? ”

Here her mistress again interrupted with a positive “ I know,” and, still more emboldened, Kätterle continued the ex-schoolmaster’s lesson to the end :

“ His lord, my lover says, will wait here beneath the window, in all reverence, though it should be till morning, until you show him your sweet face. No, don’t interrupt me yet, Mistress Eva, for you must know that Sir Heinz’s lady mother committed her dear son to my Biberli’s

care, that he might guard him from injury and illness. But since his master met you, he has been tottering about as though he had received a spear-thrust, and as the knight confessed to his faithful servitor that no leech could help him until you permitted him to open his heart to you and show you with what humble devotion——”

But here the maid was interrupted in a manner very different from her expectations, for Eva had raised herself on her pillows and, almost unable to control her voice in the excess of her wrath, exclaimed :

“The master who presumes to seek through his servant—— And by what right does the knight dare thus insolently—— But no ! Who knows what modest wish was transformed in your mouth to so unprecedented a demand ? He desired to see my face ? He wanted to speak to me in person, to confess I know not what ? From you—you, Kätterle, the maid—the knight expects——”

Here she struck her little hand angrily against the wood of the bedstead and, panting for breath, continued :

“I’ll show him !—— Yet no ! What I have to answer no one else—— From me, from me alone, he shall learn without delay. There is paper in yonder chest, on the very top ; bring it to me, with pen and ink.”

Kätterle silently hurried to obey this order, but

Eva pressed her hand upon her heaving bosom, and gazed silently into vacancy.

The manservant and the maid whom Heinz Schorlin had made his messengers certainly could have no conception of the bond that united her to him; even her own sister had misunderstood it. He should now learn that Eva Ortlieb knew what beseeemed her! But she, too, longed for another meeting, and this conduct rendered it necessary.

The sooner they two had a conversation, the better. She could confidently venture to invite him to the meeting which she had in view; her aunt, the abbess, had promised to stand by her side, if she needed her, in her intercourse with the knight.

But her colour?

Kätterle had long since laid the paper and writing materials before her, but she still pondered.

At last, with a smile of satisfaction, she seized the pen. The manner in which she intended to mention the colour should show him the nature of the bond which united them.

She was mistress of the pen, for in the convent she had copied the gospels, the psalms, and other portions of the Scriptures, yet her hand trembled as she committed the following lines to the paper:

“I am angered—nay, even grieved—that you, a godly knight, who knows the reverence due to a lady, have ventured to await my greeting in front

of my father's house. If you are a true knight, you must be aware that you voluntarily promised to obey my every glance. I can rely upon this pledge, and since I find it necessary to talk with you, I invite you to an interview—when and where, my maid, who is betrothed to your servant, shall inform him. A friend, who has your welfare at heart as well as mine, will be with me. It must be soon, with the permission of St. Clare, who, since you have chosen her for your patron saint, looks down upon you as well as on me.

“As for my colour, I know not what to name; the baubles associated with earthly love are unfamiliar to me. But blue is the colour of the pure heaven and its noble queen, the gracious Virgin. If you make this colour yours and fight for it, I shall rejoice, and am willing to name it mine.”

At the bottom of the little note she wrote only her Christian name “Eva,” and when she read it over she found that it contained, in apt and seemly phrases, everything that she desired to say to the knight.

While folding the paper and considering how she could fasten it, as there was no wax at hand, she thought of the narrow ribbons with which Els tied together, in sets of half a dozen, the fine kerchiefs worn over the neck and bosom, when they came from the wash. They were sky-blue, and nothing could be more suitable for the purpose.

Kätterle brought one from the top of the chest. Eva wound it swiftly around the little roll, and the maid hastily left the room, sure of the gratitude of the true and steadfast Biberli.

When Eva was again alone, she at first thought that she might rejoice over her hasty act; but on asking herself what Els would say, she felt certain that she would disapprove of it and, becoming disconcerted, began to imagine what consequences it might entail.

The advice which her father had recently given Wolff, never to let any important letter pass out of his hands until at least one night had elapsed, returned to her memory, and from that instant the little note burdened her soul like a hundred-pound weight.

She would fain have started up to get it back again, and a strong attraction drew her towards the window to ascertain whether Heinz Schorlin had really come and was awaiting her greeting.

Perhaps Kätterle had not yet delivered the note. What if she were still standing at the door of the house to wait for Biberli? If, to be absolutely certain, she should just glance out, that would not be looking for the knight, and she availed herself of the excuse without delay.

In an instant she sprang from her bed and gently drew the curtain aside. The street was perfectly still. The linden and the neighbouring houses cast dark, sharply outlined shadows upon

the light pavement, and from the convent garden the song of the nightingale echoed down the quiet moonlit street.

Kätterle had probably already given the note to Heinz Schorlin who, obedient to his lady's command, as beseemed a knight, had gone away. This soothed her anxiety, and with a sigh she went back to bed.

But the longing to look out into the street again was so strong that she yielded to the temptation; yet, ere she reached the window, she summoned the strength of will which was peculiar to her and, lying down, once more closed her lids, with the firm resolve to see and hear nothing. As she had not shut her eyes the night before and, from dread of the ball, had slept very little during the preceding one, she soon, though the moon was shining in through the parted curtains, lapsed into a condition midway between sleep and waking. Extreme fatigue had deadened consciousness, yet she fancied that at times she heard the sound of footsteps on the pavement outside, and the deep voices of men.

Nor was what she heard in her half-dozing state, which was soon followed by the sound slumber of youth, any delusion of the senses.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE moon found something in front of the Ortlieb house worth looking at. Rarely had she lighted with purer, brighter radiance the pathway of the mortals who excited her curiosity, than that of the two handsome young men who, at a moderate interval of time, passed through the Frauenthor, and finally entered the courtyard of the Ortlieb residence almost at the same instant.

Luna first saw them pace silently to and fro, and delighted in the resentful glances they cast at each other. This joy increased as the one in the long coat, embroidered on the shoulder with birds, and then the other, whose court costume well became his lithe, powerful limbs, sat down, each on one of the chains connecting the granite posts between the street and the courtyard.

The very tall one, who looked grave and anxious, was Wolff Eysvogel; the other, somewhat shorter, who swung gaily to and fro on the chain as if it afforded him much amusement, Heinz Schorlin.

Both frequently glanced up at the lighted bow-

window and the smaller one on the second story, behind which Eva lay half asleep. This was the first meeting of the two men.

Wolff, aware of his excellent right to remain on this spot, would have shown the annoying intruder his displeasure long before, had he not supposed that the other, whom at the first glance he recognised as a knight, was one of Countess Cordula von Montfort's admirers. Yet he soon became unable to control his anger and impatience. Yielding to a hasty impulse, he left the chain, but as he approached the stranger the latter gave his swaying seat a swifter motion and, without vouchsafing him either greeting or introductory remark, said carelessly, "This is a lovely night."

"I am of the same opinion," replied Wolff curtly. "But I would like to ask, sir, what induced you to choose the courtyard of this house to enjoy it?"

"Induced?" asked the Swiss in astonishment; then, looking the other in the face with defiant sharpness, he added scornfully:

"I am warming the chain because it suits me to do so."

"You are allowed the pleasure," returned Wolff in an irritated tone; "nay, I can understand that night birds of your sort find no better amusement. Still, it seems to me that a knight who wishes to keep iron hot might attain his object better in another way."



"Why, of course," cried Heinz Schorlin, springing swiftly to his feet with rare elasticity. "It gives a pleasant warmth when blade strikes blade or the hot blood wets them. I am no friend to darkness, and it seems to me, sir, as if we were standing in each other's light here."

"There our opinions concur for the second time this lovely night," quietly replied the patrician's son, conscious of his unusual strength and skill in fencing, with a slight touch of scorn. "Like you, I am always ready to cross blades with another; only, the public street is hardly the fitting place for it."

"May the plague take you!" muttered the Swiss in assent to Wolff's opinion. "Besides, sir, whoever grasps iron so swiftly is worth a parley. To ask whether you are of knightly lineage would be useless trouble, and should it come to a genuine sword-dance——"

"You will find a partner in me at any time," was the reply, "as I, who wear my ancient escutcheon with good right, would gladly give you a crimson memento of this hour—though you were but the son of a cobbler. But first let us ascertain—for I, too, dislike darkness—whether we are really standing in each other's light. With all due respect for your fancy for warming chains, it would be wise, ere Sir Red Coat\* puts his round our

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\* The executioner.

ankles for disturbing the peace, to have a sensible talk."

"Try it, for aught I care," responded Heinz Schorlin cheerily. "Unluckily for me, I live in a state of perpetual feud with good sense. One thing, however, seems certain without any serious reflection: the attraction which draws me here, as well as you, will not enter the cloister as a monk, but as a little nun, wears no beard, but braids her hair. Briefly, then, if you are here for Countess Cordula von Montfort's sake, your errand is vain; she will sleep at Kadolzburg to-night."

"May her slumber be sweet!" replied Wolff calmly. "She is as near to me as yonder moon."

"That gives the matter a more serious aspect," cried the knight angrily. "You or I. What is your lady's name?"

"That, to my mind, is asking too much," replied Wolff firmly.

"And the law of love gives you the right to withhold an answer. But, sir, we must nevertheless learn for the sake of what fairest fair we have each foregone sleep."

"Then tell me, by your favour, your lady's *colour*," Wolff asked the Swiss.

The latter laughed gaily: "I am still putting that question to my saint."

Then, noticing Wolff's shake of the head, he went on in a more serious tone: "If you will have

a little patience, I hope I may be able to tell you, ere we part."

This assurance also seemed to Wolff an enigma.

Who in the wide world would come from under the respectable Ortlieb roof, at this hour, to tell a stranger anything whatsoever concerning one of its daughters? Neither could have given him the right to regard her as his lady, and steal at night, like a marten, around the house which contained his dearest treasure. This obscurity was an offence to Wolff Eysvogel, and he was not the man to submit to it. Yonder insolent fellow should learn, to his hurt, that he had made a blunder.

But scarcely had he begun to explain to Heinz that he claimed the right to protect both the daughters of this house, the younger as well as the older, since they had no brother, when the knight interrupted:

"Oho! There are two of them, and she, too, spoke of a sister. So, if it comes to sharing, sir, we need not emulate the judgment of Solomon. Let us see! The colour is uncertain, but to every Christian mortal a name clings as closely as a shadow and, if I mention the initial letter of the one which adorns my lady, I believe I shall commit no offence that a court of love could condemn. The initial, which I like because it is daintily rounded and not too difficult to write—mark it well—is 'E.'"

Wolff Eysvogel started slightly and gripped the

dagger in his belt, but instantly withdrew his hand and answered with mingled amusement and indignation: "Thanks for your good will, Sir Knight, but this, too, brings us no nearer our goal; the E is the initial of both the Ortlieb sisters. The elder who, as you may know, is my betrothed bride, bears the name of Elizabeth, or Els, as we say in Nuremberg."

"And the younger," cried Heinz joyously, "honours with her gracious innocence the name of her through whom sin came into the world."

"But you, Sir Knight," exclaimed Wolff fiercely, "would do better not to name sin and Eva Ortlieb in the same breath. If you are of a different opinion——"

"Then," interrupted the Swiss, "we come back to warming the iron."

"As you say," cried Wolff resolutely. "In spite of the peace of the country, I will be at your service at any time. As you see, I went out unarmed, and it would not be well done to cross swords here."

"Certainly not," Heinz assented. "But many days and nights will follow this moonlight one, and that you may have little difficulty in finding me whenever you desire, know that my name is Heinrich—or to more intimate friends, among whom you might easily be numbered if we don't deprive each other of the pleasure of meeting again under the sun—Heinz Schorlin."

"Schorlin?" asked Wolff in surprise. "Then you are the knight who, when a beardless boy, cut down on the Marchfield the Bohemian whose lance had slain the Emperor's charger, the Swiss who aided him to mount the steed of Ramsweg of Thurgau—your uncle, if I am not mistaken—and then took the wild ride to bring up the tall Capeller, with his troops, who so gloriously decided the day."

"And," laughed Heinz, "who was finally borne off the field as dead before the fulfilment of his darling wish to redden Swiss steel with royal Bohemian blood. This closed the chronicle, Herr—what shall I call you?"

"Wolff Eysvogel, of Nuremberg," replied the other.

"Aha! A son of the rich merchant where the Duke of Göllich found quarters?" cried the Swiss, lifting his cap bordered with fine miniver. "May confusion seize me! If I were not my father's son, I wouldn't mind changing places with you. It must make the neck uncommonly stiff, methinks, to have a knightly escutcheon on door and breast, and yet be able to fling florins and zecchins broadcast without offending the devil by an empty purse. If you don't happen to know how such a thing looks, I can show you."

"Yet rumour says," observed Wolff, "that the Emperor is gracious to you, and knows how to fill it again."

"If one doesn't go too far," replied Heinz, "and my royal master, who lacks spending money himself only too often, doesn't keep his word that it was done for the last time. I heard that yesterday morning, and thought that the golden blessing which preceded it would last the dear saints only knew how long. But ere the cock had crowed even once this morning the last florin had vanished. Dice, Herr Wolff Eysvogel—dice!"

"Then I would keep my hands off them," said the other meaningly.

"If the Old Nick or some one else did not always guide them back! Did you, a rich man's son, never try what the dice would do for you?"

"Yes, Sir Knight. It was at Venice, where I was pursuing my studies, and tried my luck at gambling on many a merry evening with other sons of mercantile families from Nuremberg, Augsburg, and Cologne."

"And your feathers were generously plucked?"

"By no means. I usually left a winner. But after they fleeced a dear friend from Ulm, and he robbed his master, I dropped dice."

"And you did so as easily as if it were a short fast after an abundant meal?"

"It was little more difficult," Wolff asserted. "My father would have gladly seen me outdo my countrymen, and sent me more money than I needed. Why should I deprive honest fellows who had less?"

"That's just the difficulty," cried his companion eagerly. "It was easy for you to renounce games of chance because your winnings only added more to the rest, and you did not wish to pluck poorer partners. But I! A poor devil like me cannot maintain armour-bearer, servants, and steeds out of what the dear little mother at home in her faithful care can spare from crops and interest. How could we succeed in making a fair appearance at court and in the tournament if it were not for the dice? And then, when I lose, I again become but the poor knight the saints made me; when I win, on the contrary, I am the great and wealthy lord I would have been born had the Lord permitted me to choose my own cradle. Besides, those who lose through me are mainly dukes, counts, and gentlemen with rich fiefs and fat bourgs, whom losing doubtless benefits, as bleeding relieves a sick man. What suits the soldier does not befit the merchant. We live wholly amid risks and wagers. Every battle, every skirmish is a game whose stake is life. Whoever reflects long is sure to lose. If I could only describe, Herr Eysvogel, what it is to dash headlong upon the foe!"

"I could imagine that vividly enough," Wolff eagerly interposed. "I, too, have broken many a lance in the lists and shed blood enough."

"What a dunce I am!" cried Heinz in amazement, pressing his hand upon his brow. "That's

why your face was so familiar! By my saint! I am no knight if I did not see you then, before the battle waxed hot. It was close beside your Burgrave Frederick, who held aloft the imperial banner."

"Probably," replied Wolff in a tone of assent. "He sometimes entrusted the standard to me, when it grew too heavy for his powerful arm, because I was the tallest and the strongest of our Nuremberg band. But, unluckily, I could not render this service long. A scimitar gashed my head. The larger part of the little scar is hidden under my hair."

"The little scar!" repeated Heinz gaily. "It was wide enough, at any rate, for the greatest soul to slip through it. A scar on the head from a wound received four years ago, and yet distinctly visible in the moonlight!"

"It should serve as a warning," replied Wolff, glancing anxiously up the street. "If the patrol, or any nocturnal reveller should catch sight of us, it would be ill for the fair fame of the Ortlieb sisters, for everybody knows that only one—Els's betrothed lover—has a right to await a greeting here at so late an hour. So follow me into the shadow of the linden, I entreat you; for yonder—surely you see it too—a figure is gliding towards us."

Heinz Schorlin's laugh rang out like a bell as he whispered to the Nuremberg patrician: "That figure is familiar to me, and neither we nor our



ladies need fear any evil from it. Excuse me a moment, and I'll wager twenty gold florins against yonder linden leaf that, ere the moonlight has left the curbstone, I can tell you my lady's colour."

As he spoke he hastened towards the figure, now standing motionless within the shadow of the doorpost beside the lofty entrance.

Wolff Eysvogel remained alone, gazing thoughtfully upon the ground.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE silent wanderer above had expected to behold a scene very unlike an interview between two men. The latter required neither her purest, fullest light, nor the shadow of a blossoming linden.

Now Luna saw the young Nuremberg merchant gaze after the Swiss with an expression of such deep anxiety and pain upon his manly features that she felt the utmost pity for him. He did not look upward as usual to the window of his beautiful Els, but either fixed his eyes upon the spot where his new acquaintance was conversing with another person, or bent them anxiously upon the ground.

As Wolff thought of Heinz Schorlin, it seemed as if Fate had thrown him into the way of the Swiss that he might feel with twofold anguish the thorns besetting his own life path. The young knight was proffered the rose without the thorn. What cares had he? The present threw into his lap its fairest blessings, and when he looked into the future he beheld only the cheering buds of hope.

Yet this favourite of fortune had expressed a

desire to change places with him. The thought that many others, too, would be glad to step into his shoes tortured Wolff's honest heart as though he himself were to blame for the delusion of these short-sighted folk.

Apart from his strength and health, his well-formed body, his noble birth, his faith in the love of his betrothed bride—at this hour he forgot how much these things were—he found nothing in his lot which seemed worth desiring.

He might not even rejoice in his stainless honesty with the same perfect confidence as in his betrothal.

Yes, he had cared for noble old Berthold Vorchtel's daughter as if she were his sister. He had even found pleasure in the thought that Ursula was destined to become his wife, yet no word either of love or allusion to future marriage had been exchanged between them. He had felt free, and had a right to consider himself so, when love for Els Ortlieb overwhelmed him so swiftly and powerfully.

Yet Ursula and her oldest brother treated him as if he had been guilty of base disloyalty. His pure conscience, however, enabled him to endure this more easily than the other burden, of which he became aware on the long-anticipated day when his father made him a partner in the old firm and gave him an insight into the condition of the property and the course of the business.

Then he had learned the heavy losses which had

been sustained recently, and the sad disparity existing between the great display by which his father and mother, as well as his grandmother, the countess, maintained the appearance of their former princely wealth, and the balances of the last few years.

When he had just boasted to the reckless young knight that he had given up gaming, he told but half the truth, for though since his period of study in Venice, and later in Milan, he had not touched dice, he had been forced to consent to a series of enterprises undertaken by his father, whose stakes were far different from the gambling of the knights and nobles at the Green Shield or in the camp.

Yet he intended to bind the fate of the woman he loved to his own, for Els, spite of the opposition of his family, would have been already indissolubly united to him, had not one failure after another destroyed his courage to take her hand. Finally, he deemed it advisable to await the result of the last great enterprise, now on the eve of decision. It might compensate for many of the losses of recent years. Should it be favourable, the heaviest burden would be lifted from his soul; in the opposite case the old house would be shaken to its foundations. Yet even its fall would have been easier for him to endure than this cruel uncertainty, to which was added the torturing anxiety of bearing the responsibility of things for which he was not to blame, and of which, moreover, he was even denied a clear

view. Yet he felt absolutely certain that his father was concealing many things, perhaps the worst, and often felt as if he were walking in the darkness over a mouldering bridge. Ah, if it could only be propped up, and then rebuilt! But if it must give way, he hoped the catastrophe would come soon. He knew that he possessed the strength to build a new home for Els and himself. Even were it small and modest, it should be erected on a firm foundation and afford a safe abode for its inmates.

What did the young, joyous-hearted fellow who was wooing Eva know of such cares? Fate had placed him on the sunny side of life, where everything flourished, and set him, Wolff, in the shade, where grass and flowers died.

There is a magic in fame which the young soul cannot easily escape, and the name of Heinz Schorlin was indeed honoured and on every lip. The imagination associated with it the cheerful nature which, like a loyal comrade, goes hand in hand with success, deserved and undeserved good fortune, woman's favour, doughty deeds, the highest and strongest traits of character.

An atmosphere like sunshine, which melts all opposition, emanated from Heinz. Wolff had experienced it himself. He had seriously intended to make the insolent intruder feel his strong arm, but since he had learned the identity of the Swiss his acts and nature appeared in a new light. His insolence had gained the aspect of self-confidence

which did not lack justification, and when a valiant knight talked to him so frankly, like a younger brother to an older and wiser one, it seemed to the lonely man who, of late, completely absorbed in the course of business, had held aloof from the sports, banquets, and diversions of the companions of his own age, that he had experienced something unusually pleasant. How tender and affectionate it sounded when Heinz alluded to the "little mother" at home! He, Wolff, on the contrary, could think only with a shade of bitterness of the weak woman to whom he owed his existence, and whom filial duty and earnest resolution alike commanded him to love, yet who made it so difficult for him to regard her with anything save anxiety or secret disapproval.

Perhaps the greatest advantage which the Swiss possessed over him was his manner of speaking of his family. How could it ever have entered Wolff Eysvogel's mind to call the tall, stiff woman, who was the feeble echo of her extravagant, arrogant mother, and who rustled towards him, even in the early morning, adorned with feathers and robed in rich brocade, his "dear little mother"?

Whoever spoke in the warm, loving tones that fell from the lips of Sir Heinz when he mentioned his relatives at home certainly could have no evil nature. No one need fear, though his usual mode of speech was so wanton, that he would trifle with a pure, innocent creature like Eva.

How Heinz had succeeded in winning so speedily the devout child, who was so averse to the idle coquetries of the companions of her own age, seemed incomprehensible, but he had no time to investigate now.

He must go, for he had long been burning with impatience to depart. The declaration of peace had taken effect only a few hours before, and the long waggon trains from Italy, of which he had told Els yesterday, were still delayed. The freight of spices and Levantine goods, Milan velvets, silks, and fine Florentine cloths, which they were bringing from the city of St. Mark, represented a large fortune. If it arrived in time, the profits would cover a great portion of the losses of the past two years, and the house would again be secure. If the worst should befall, how would his family submit to deprivation, perhaps even to penury? He had less fear of his grandmother's outbursts of wrath, but what would become of his feeble mother, who was as dependent as a child on her own mother? Yet he loved her; he felt deeply troubled by the thought of the severe humiliation which menaced her. His sister Isabella, too, was dear to him, in spite of her husband, the reckless Sir Seitz Siebenburg, in whose hands the gold paid from the coffers of the firm melted away, yet who was burdened with a mountain of debts.

Wolff had left orders at home to have his horse saddled. He had intended only to wave a greeting

to his Els and then ride to Neumarkt, or, if necessary, as far as Ingolstadt, to meet the wains.

A word of farewell to the new acquaintance, who was probably destined to be his brother-in-law, and then—— But just at that moment Heinz approached, and in reply to Wolff's low question: "And your lady's colour?" he answered joyously, pointing to the breast of his doublet: "I am carrying the messenger which promises to inform me, here on my heart. In the darkness it was silent; but the bright moonlight yonder will loose its tongue, unless the characters here are too unlike those of the prayer-book."

Drawing out Eva's little roll as he spoke, he approached a brightly lighted spot, pointed to the ribbon which fastened it, and exclaimed: "Doubtless she used her own colour to tie it. Blue, the pure, exquisite blue of her eyes! I thought so! Forget-me-not blue! The most beautiful of colours. You must pardon my impatience!"

He was about to begin to read the lines; but Wolff stopped him by pointing to the Ortlieb residence and to two drunken soldiers who came out of the tavern "For Thirsty Troopers," and walked, singing and staggering, up the opposite side of the street. Then, extending his hand to Heinz in farewell, he asked in a low tone, pointing to Biberli's figure just emerging from the shade, who was the messenger of love who served him so admirably.



"My shadow," replied the knight. "I loosed him from my heels and bade him stand there. But no offence, Herr Wolff Eysvogel; you'll make the queer fellow's acquaintance if, like myself, it would be agreeable to you to meet often, not only on iron chains, but on friendly terms with each other."

"Nothing would please me more," replied the other. "But how in the world could it happen that this well-guarded fortress surrendered to you after so short a resistance?"

"Heinz Schorlin rides swiftly," he interrupted; but Wolff exclaimed: "A swift ride awaits me, too, though of a different kind. When I return, I shall expect you to tell me how you won our 'little saint,' my sister-in-law Eva. The two beautiful Ortlieb 'Es' are *one* in the eyes of the townsfolk, so we also will be often named in the same breath, and shall do well to feel brotherly regard for each other. There shall be no fault on my part. Farewell, till we meet again, an' it please God *in* and not *outside* of our ladies' dwelling."

While speaking he clasped the knight's hand with so firm a grasp that it seemed as if he wished to force him to feel its pressure a long time, and hastened through the Frauenthor.

Heinz Schorlin gazed thoughtfully after him a short time, then beckoned to Biberli and, though the interval required for him to reach his master's side was very brief, it was sufficient for the bold

young lover, tortured by his ardent longing, to form another idea.

"Look yonder, Biberli!" he exclaimed. "The holy-water basin on the door-post, the escutcheon on the lintel above, the helmet, which would probably bear my weight. From there I can reach the window-sill with my hand, and once I have grasped it, I need only make one bold spring and, hurrah! I'm on it."

"May our patron saint have mercy on us!" cried the servant in horror. "You can get there as easily as you can spring on your two feet over two horses; but the coming down would certainly be a long distance lower than you would fancy—into the 'Hole,' as they call the prison here, and, moreover, though probably not until some time later, straight to the flames of hell; for you would have committed a great sin against a noble maiden rich in every virtue, who deemed you worthy of her love. And, besides, there are two Es. They occupy the same room, and the house is full of men and maid servants."

"Pedagogue!" said the knight, peevishly.

"Ay, that was Biberli's calling once," replied the servant, "and, for the sake of your lady mother at home, I wish I were one still, and you, Sir Heinz, would have to obey me like an obedient pupil. You are well aware that I rarely use her sacred name to influence you, but I do so now; and if you cherish her in your heart and do not

wish to swoop down on the innocent little dove like a destroying hawk, turn your back upon this place, where we have already lingered too long."

But this well-meant warning seemed to have had brief influence upon the person to whom it was addressed. Suddenly, with a joyous "There she is!" he snatched his cap from his head and waved a greeting to the window.

But in a few minutes he replaced it with a petulant gesture of the hand, saying sullenly: "Vanished! She dared not grant me a greeting, because she caught sight of you."

"Let us thank and praise a kind Providence for it," said his servitor with a sigh of relief, "since our Lord and Saviour assumed the form of a servant, that of a scarecrow, in which he has done admirable service, is far too noble and distinguished for Biberli."

As he spoke he walked on before the knight, and pointing to the tavern beside the Frauenturm whose sign bore the words "For Thirsty Troopers," he added: "A green bush at the door. That means, unless the host is a rogue, a cask fresh broached. I wonder whether my tongue is cleaving to my palate from dread of your over-hasty courage, or whether it is really so terribly sultry here!"

"At any rate," Heinz interrupted, "a cup of wine will harm neither of us; for I myself feel how

oppressive the air is. Besides, it is light in the tavern, and who knows what the little note will tell me."

Meanwhile they passed the end of St. Klarengasse and went up to the green bush, which projected from the end of a pole far out into the street.

Soldiers in the pay of the city, and men-at-arms in the employ of the Emperor and the princes who had come to attend the Reichstag, were sitting over their wine in the tavern. From the ceiling hung two crossed iron triangles, forming a six-pointed star. The tallow candles burning low in their sockets, which it contained, and some pitch-pans in the corners, diffused but a dim light through the long apartment.

Master and man found an empty table apart from the other guests, in a niche midway down the rear wall.

Without heeding the brawling and swearing, the rude songs and disorderly shouts, the drumming of clenched fists upon the oak tables, the wild laughter of drunken soldiers, the giggling and screeching of bar-maids, and the scolding and imperious commands of the host, they proved that the green bush had not lied, for the wine really did come from a freshly opened cask just brought up from the cellar. But as the niche was illumined only by the tiny oil lamp burning beneath the image of the Virgin, bedizened with flowers and gold and silver

tinsel, fastened against the wall, Biberli asked the weary bar-maid for a brighter light.

When the girl withdrew he sighed heavily, saying: "O my lord, if you only knew! Even now, when we are again among men and the wine has refreshed me, I feel as if rats were gnawing at my soul. Conscience, my lord—conscience!"

"You, too, are usually quite ready to play the elf in the rose-garden of love," replied Heinz gaily. "Moreover, I shall soon need a T and an S embroidered on my own doublet, for—— Why don't they bring the light? Another cup of wine, the note, and then with renewed vigour we'll go back again."

"For God's sake," interrupted Biberli, "do not speak, do not even think, of the bold deed you suggested! Doesn't it seem like a miracle that not one of the many Ortlieb and Montfort servants crossed your path? Even such a child of good luck as yourself can scarcely expect a second one the same evening. And if there is not, and you go back under the window, you will be recognised, perhaps even seized, and then—O my lord, consider this!—then you will bear throughout your life the reproach of having brought shame and bitter sorrow upon a maiden whom you yourself know is lovely, devout, and pure. And I, too, who serve you loyally in your lady mother's behalf, as well as the poor maid who, to pleasure me, interceded for you with her mistress, will run the risk of our

lives if you are caught climbing into the window or committing any similar offence; for in this city they are prompt with the stocks, the stone collar, the rack, and the tearing of the tongue from the mouth whenever any one is detected playing the part of go-between in affairs of love."

"Usually, old fellow," replied Heinz in a tone of faint reproach, "we considered it a matter of course that, though we took the most daring risks in such things, we were certain not to be caught. Yet, to be frank, some incomprehensible burden weighs upon my soul. My feelings are confused and strange. I would rather tear the crown from the head of yonder image of the Virgin than do aught to this sweet innocence for which she could not thank me."

Here he paused, for the bar-maid brought a two-branched candelabrum, in which burned two tallow candles.

Heinz instantly opened the little roll.

How delicate were the characters it contained! His heart's beloved had committed them to the paper with her own hand, and the knight's blood surged hotly through his veins as he gazed at them. It seemed as though he held in his hand a portion of herself and, obeying a hasty impulse, he kissed the letter.

Then he eagerly began to study the writing; he had never seen anything so delicate and peculiar in form.

The deciphering of the first lines in which, it is true, she called him a godly knight, but also informed him that his boldness had angered her, caused him much difficulty, and Biberli was often obliged to help.

Would she have rebuffed him so ungraciously with her lips as with the pen? Was it possible that, on account of a request which every lover ventured to address to his lady, she would withdraw the favour which rendered him so happy? Oh, yes, for innocence is delicate and sensitive. She ought to have repelled him thus. He was secretly rejoiced to see the sweet modesty which had so charmed him again proved. He must know what the rest of the letter contained, and the ex-school-master was at hand to give the information at once.

True, the hastily written sentences presented some difficulties even for Biberli, but after glancing through the whole letter, he exclaimed with a satisfied smile: "Just as I expected! At the first look one might think that the devout little lady was wholly unlike the rest of her sex, but on examining more closely she proves as much like any other beautiful girl as two peas. With good reason and prudent caution she forbids the languishing knight to remain beneath her window, yet she will risk a pleasant little interview in some safe nook. That is wise for so young a girl, and at the same time natural and womanly. I don't know why you

knit your brows. Since the first Eve came from a crooked rib, all her daughters prefer devious ways. But first hear what she writes." Then, without heeding his master's gloomy face, he began to read the note aloud.

Heinz listened intently, and after he had heard that the lady of his love did not desire to meet him alone, but only under the protection of a friend and her saint, when he heard her name her colour, it is true, but also express the expectation that, as a godly knight, he would fight for her sake in honour of the gracious Virgin, his face brightened.

During Biberli's scoffing comments he had felt as if a tempest had hurled her pure image in the dust. But now that he knew what she asked of him, it returned as a matter of course to its old place and, with a sigh of relief, he felt that he need not be ashamed of the emotions which this wonderful young creature had awakened in his soul. She had opened her pious heart like a trusting sister to an older brother, and what he had seen there was something unusual—things which had appeared sacred to him even when a child. Since he took leave of her in the ball-room he had felt as though Heaven had loaned this, its darling, to earth for but a brief space, and her brocade robe must conceal angel wings. Should it surprise him that the pure innocence which filled her whole being was expressed also in her letter, if she summoned him, not to idle love-dalliance but to a



covenant of souls, a mutual conflict for what was highest and most sacred? Such a thing was incomprehensible to Biberli; but notwithstanding her letter—nay, even on its account—he longed still more ardently to lead her home to his mother and see her receive the blessing of the woman whom he so deeply honoured.

He had Eva's letter read for the second and the third time. But when Biberli paused, and in a few brief sentences cast fresh doubts upon the writer, Heinz angrily stopped him. "The longing of the godly heart of a pure maiden—mark this well—has naught in common with that diabolical delight in secret love-dalliance for which others yearn. My wish to force my way to her was sinful, and it was punished severely enough, for during your rude scoffs I felt as though you had set fire to the house over my head. But from this I perceive in what a sacred, inviolable spot her image had found a place. True, it is denied you to follow the lofty, heavenward aspiration of a pure soul——"

"O my lord," interrupted the servitor with hands uplifted in defence, "who besought you not to measure this innocent daughter of a decorous household, who was scarcely beyond childhood, by the standard you applied to others? Who entreated you to spare her fair fame? And if you deem the stuff of which the servant is made too coarse to understand what moves so pure a soul,

you do Biberli injustice, for, by my patron saint, though duty commanded me to interpose doubts and scruples between you and a passion from which could scarcely spring aught that would bring joy to your mother's heart I, too, asked myself the question why, in these days, a devout maiden should not long to try her skill in conversion upon a valiant knight who served her. Ever since St. Francis of Assisi appeared in Italy, barefooted monks and grey-robed nuns, who follow him, Franciscans and Sisters of St. Clare stream hither as water flows into a mill-race when the sluice-gates are opened. With what edification we, too, listened to the old Minorite whom we picked up by the wayside, at the tavern where we usually found pleasure in nothing but drinking, gambling, shouting, and singing! Besides, I know from my sweetheart with what exemplary devotion the lovely Eva follows St. Clare."

"Who is now and will remain my patron saint also, old Biber," interrupted Heinz with joyful emotion, as he laid his hand gratefully on his follower's shoulder; then rising and beckoning to the bar-maid, added: "The stuff of which you are made, old comrade, is inferior to no man's. Only now and then the pedagogue plays you a trick. Had you uttered your real opinion in the first place, the wine would have tasted better to us both. Let Eva try the work of conversion on me! What, save my lady's love, is more to me than our

holy faith? It must indeed be a delight to take the field for the Church and against her foes!"

While speaking, he paid the reckoning and went out with Biberli.

The moon was now pouring her silver beams, with full radiance, over the quiet street, the linden in front of the Ortlieb house, and its lofty gable roof. Only a single room in the spacious mansion was still lighted, the bow-windowed one occupied by the two sisters.

Heinz, without heeding Biberli's renewed protest, looked upward, silently imploring Eva's pardon for having misjudged her even a moment. His gaze rested devoutly on the open window, behind which a curtain was stirring. Was it the night breeze that almost imperceptibly raised and lowered it, or was her own dear self concealed behind it?

Just at that moment he suddenly felt his servant's hand on his arm, and as he followed his horror-stricken gaze, a chill ran through his own veins. From the heavy door of the house, which stood half open, a white-robed figure emerged with the solemn, noiseless footfall of a ghost, and advanced across the courtyard towards him.

Was it a restless spirit risen from its grave at the midnight hour, which must be close at hand?

Through his brain, like a flash of lightning, darted the thought that Eva had spoken to him of

her invalid mother. Had she died? Was her wandering soul approaching him to drive him from the threshold of the house which hid her endangered child?

But no!

The figure had stopped before the door and now, raising its head, gazed with wide eyes upward at the moon, and—he was not mistaken—it was no spectre of darkness; it was she for whom every pulse of his heart throbbed—Eva!

No human creature had ever seemed to him so divinely fair as she in her long white night-robe, over which fell the thick waves of her light hair. The horror which had seized him yielded to the most ardent yearning. Pressing his hand upon his throbbing heart, he watched her every movement. He longed to go forward to meet her, yet a supernatural spell seemed to paralyse his energy. He would sooner have dared clasp in his arms the image of a beautiful Madonna than this embodiment of pure, helpless, gracious innocence.

Now she herself drew nearer, but he felt as if his will was broken, and with timid awe he drew back one step, and then another, till the chain stopped him.

Just at that moment she paused, stretched out her white arm with a beckoning gesture, and again turned towards the house, Heinz following because he could not help it, her sign drew him after her with magnetic power.

Now Eva entered the dimly lighted corridor, and again her uplifted hand seemed to invite him to follow. Then—the impetuous throbbing of his heart almost stifled him—she set her little white foot on the first step of the stairs and led the way up to the first landing, where she paused, lifting her face to the open window, through which the moonbeams streamed into the hall, flooding her head, her figure, and every surrounding object with their soft light.

Heinz followed step by step. It seemed as if the wild surges of a sea were roaring in his ears, and glittering sparks were dancing before his yearning, watchful eyes.

How he loved her! How intense was the longing which drew him after her! And yet another emotion stirred in his heart with still greater power—grief, sincere grief, which pierced his inmost soul, that she could have beckoned to him, permitted him to follow her, granted him what he would never have ventured to ask. Nay, when he set his foot on the first step, it seemed as if the temple which contained his holiest treasure fell crashing around him, and an inner voice cried loudly: “Away, away from here! Would you exchange the purest and loftiest things for what tomorrow will fill you with grief and loathing?” it continued to admonish. “You will relinquish what is dearest and most sacred to secure what is ready to rush into your arms on all the high-roads.

Hence, hence, you poor, deluded mortal, ere it is too late!"

But even had he known it was the fair fiend Venus herself moving before him under the guise of Eva, the spell of her unutterable beauty would have constrained him to follow her, though the goal were the Hörselberg, death, and hell.

On the second landing she again stood still and, leaning against a pillar, raised her arms and extended them towards the moon, in whose silvery light they gleamed like marble. Heinz saw her lips move, heard his own name fall from them, and all self-control vanished.

"Eva!" he cried with passionate fervor, holding out his arms to clasp her; but, ere he even touched her, a shriek of despairing anguish echoed loudly back from the walls.

The sound of her own name had broken the threads with which the mysterious power of the moonlight had drawn her from her couch, down through the house, out of doors, and again back to the stairs.

Sleep vanished with the dream which she had shared with him and, shuddering, she perceived where she was, saw the knight before her, became conscious that she had left her chamber in her night-robe, with disordered hair and bare feet; and, frantic with horror at the thought of the resistless might with which a mysterious force constrained her to obey it against her own will, deeply

wounded by the painful feeling that she had been led so far across the bounds of maidenly modesty, hurt and angered by the boldness of the man before her, who had dared to follow her into her parents' house, she again raised her voice, this time to call her from whom she was accustomed to seek and find help in every situation in life.

"Els! Els!" rang up the stairs; and the next moment Els, who had already heard Eva's first scream, sprang down the few steps to her sister's side.

One glance at the trembling girl in her night-robe, and at the moonlight which still bathed her in its rays, told Els what had drawn Eva to the stairs.

The knight must have slipped into the house and found her there. She knew him and, before Heinz had time to collect his thoughts, she said soothingly to her sister, who threw her arms around her as though seeking protection: "Go up to your room, child!—Help her, Kätterle. I'll come directly."

While Eva, leaning on the maid's arm, mounted the stairs with trembling knees, Els turned to the Swiss and said in a grave, resolute tone: "If you are worthy of your escutcheon, Sir Knight, you will not now fly like a coward from this house, across whose threshold you stole with shameful insolence, but await me here until I return. You shall not be detained long. But, to guard your-

self and another from misinterpretation, you must hear me."

Heinz nodded assent in silence, as if still under the spell of what he had recently experienced. But, ere he reached the entry below, Martsche, the old housekeeper, and Endres, the aged head packer, came towards him, just as they had risen from their beds, the former with a petticoat flung round her shoulders, the latter wrapped in a horse-blanket.

Eva's shriek had waked both, but Els enjoined silence on everyone and, after telling them to go back to bed, said briefly that Eva in her somnambulism had this time gone out into the street and been brought back by the knight. Finally, she again said to Heinz, "Presently!" and then went to her sister.



## CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Biberli bade farewell to his sweetheart, who gave him Eva's little note, he had arranged to meet her again in an hour or, if his duties detained him longer, in two ; but after the "true and steadfast" fellow left her, her heart throbbed more and more anxiously, for the wrong she had done in acting as messenger between the young daughter of her employers and a stranger knight was indeed hard to forgive.

Instead of waiting in the kitchen or entry for her lover's return, as she had intended, she had gone to the image of the Virgin at the gate of the Convent of St. Clare, before which she had often found consolation, especially when homesick yearning for the mountains of her native Switzerland pressed upon her too sorely. This time also it had been gracious to her, for after she had prayed very devoutly and vowed to give a candle to the Mother of God, as well as to St. Clare, she fancied that the image smiled upon her and promised that she should go unpunished.

On her return the knight had just followed Eva

into the house, and Biberli pursued his master as far as the stairs. Here Kätterle met her lover, but, when she learned what was occurring, she became greatly enraged and incensed by the base interpretation which the servant placed upon Eva's going out into the street and, terrified by the danger into which the knight threatened to plunge them all, she forgot the patience and submission she was accustomed to show the true and steadfast Biberli. But—resolved to protect her young mistress from the presumptuous knight—scarcely had she angrily cried shame upon her lover for this base suspicion, protesting that Eva had never gone to seek a knight but, as she had often done on bright moonlight nights, walked in her sleep down the stairs and out of doors, when the young girl's shriek of terror summoned her to her aid.

Biberli looked after her sullenly, meanwhile execrating bitterly enough the wild love which had robbed his master of reason and threatened to hurl him, Biberli, and even the innocent Kätterle, whose brave defence of her mistress had especially pleased him, into serious misfortune.

When old Endres appeared he had slipped behind a wall formed of bales heaped one above another, and did not stir until the entry was quiet again.

To his amazement he had then found his master standing beside the door of the house, but his question—which, it is true, was not wholly devoid

of a shade of sarcasm—whether the knight was waiting for the return of his sleep-walking sweet-heart, was so harshly rebuffed that he deemed it advisable to keep silence for a time.

Though Heinz Schorlin had perceived that he had followed an unconscious somnambulist, he was not yet capable of calmly reflecting upon what had occurred or of regarding the future with prudence. He knew one thing only: the fear was idle that the lovely creature whose image, surrounded by a halo of light, still hovered before him like a vision from a higher, more beautiful world, was an unworthy person who, with a face of angelic innocence, transgressed the laws of custom and modesty. Her shriek of terror, her horror at seeing him, and the cry for help which had brought her sister to her aid and roused the servants from their sleep, gave him the right to esteem her as highly as ever; and this conviction fanned into such a blaze the feeling of happiness which love had awakened and his foolish distrust had already begun to stifle, that he was firmly resolved, cost what it might, to make Eva his own.

After he had reached this determination he began to reflect more quietly. What cared he for liberty and a rapid advance in the career upon which he had entered, if only his future life was beautified by her love!

If he were required to woo her in the usual form, he would do so. And what a charming yet

resolute creature was the other E, who, in her anxiety about her sister, had crossed his path with such grave, firm dignity! She was Wolff Eysvogel's betrothed bride, and it seemed to him a very pleasant thing to call the young man, whom he had so quickly learned to esteem, his brother-in-law.

If the father refused his daughter to him, he would leave Nuremberg and ride to the Rhine, where Hartmann, the Emperor Rudolph's son, whom he loved like a younger brother, was now living. Heinz had instructed the lad of eighteen in the use of the lance and the sword, and Hartmann had sent him word the day before that the Rhine was beautiful, but without him he but half enjoyed even the pleasantest things. He needed him. Hundreds of other knights and squires could break in the new horses for the Emperor and the young Bohemian princess, though perhaps not quite so skilfully. Hartmann would understand him and persuade his imperial father to aid him in his suit. The warm-hearted youth could not bear to see him sorrowful, and without Eva there was no longer joy or happiness.

He was roused from these thoughts and dreams by his own name called in a low tone.

Kätterle had gone with Eva to the chamber, whither the older sister followed them. Tenderly embracing the weeping girl, she had kissed her wet eyes and whispered in an agitated voice, with which, however, blended a great deal of affection-

ate mischief: "The wolf who forced his way into the house does not seem quite so harmless as mine, whom I have succeeded in taming very tolerably. Go to mother now, darling. I'll be back directly."

"What do you intend to do?" asked Eva timidly, still unable, under the influence of her strange experiences, to regain her self-control.

"To look around the house," replied her sister, beckoning to Kätterle to accompany her.

In the entry she questioned the maid with stern decision, and the trembling girl owned, amid her tears, that Eva had sent a little note to the knight in reply to his request that she would name her colour, and whatever else her anxious mistress desired hastily to learn.

After a threatening "We will discuss your outrageous conduct later," Els hurried down-stairs, and found in the entry the man whose pleasure in the pursuit of the innocent child whom she protected she meant to spoil. But though she expressed her indignation to the knight with the utmost harshness, he besought a hearing with so much respect and in such seemingly words, that she requested him, in a gentler tone, to speak freely. But scarcely had he begun to relate how Eva, at the ball, had filled his heart with the purest love, when the trampling of horses' hoofs, which had come nearer and nearer to the house, suddenly ceased, and Biberli, who had gone into the court-

yard, came hurrying back, exclaiming in a tone of warning, "The von Montforts!"

At the same moment two men-servants threw back both leaves of the door, torchlight mingled with the moonbeams in the courtyard, and the next instant a goodly number of knights and gentlemen entered the hall.

Biberli was not mistaken. The von Montforts had returned home, instead of spending the night at Kadolzburg, and neither Els nor the Swiss had the time or disposition to seek concealment.

The intruders were preceded by men-servants, whose torches lighted the long, lofty storehouse brilliantly. It seemed to Els as if her heart stopped beating and she felt her cheeks blanch.

Here she beheld Count von Montfort's bronzed face, the countenance of a sportsman and reveller; yonder the frank, handsome features of the young Burgrave, Eitelfritz von Zollern, framed by the hood of the Knights of St. John, drawn up during the night-ride; there the pale, noble visage of the quiet knight Boemund Altrosen, far famed for his prowess with lance and sword; beyond, the scarred, martial countenance of Count Casper Schlick, set in a mass of tangled brown locks; and then the watery, blue eyes of Sir Seitz Siebenburg, the husband of her future sister-in-law Isabella.

They had pressed in, talking eagerly, laughing, and rejoicing that the wild night ride proposed by Cordula von Montfort, which had led over dark

forest paths, lighted only by a stray moonbeam, and often across fields and ditches and through streams, had ended without mischance to man or beast.

Now they all crowded around the countess, Seitz Siebenburg bending towards her with such zeal that the ends of his huge mustache brushed the plumes in her cap, and Boemund Altrosen, who had just been gazing into the flushed face of the daring girl with the warm joy of true love, cast a look of menace at him.

Els, too, greatly disliked "the Mustache," as her future brother-in-law was called because the huge ornament on his upper lip made him conspicuous among the beardless knights. She was aware that he returned the feeling, and had left no means untried to incite Wolff Eysvogel's parents to oppose his betrothal. Now he was one of the first to notice her and, after whispering with a malicious smile to the countess and those nearest to him, he looked at her so malevolently that she could easily guess what interpretation he was trying to put upon her nocturnal meeting with the Swiss in the eyes of his companions.

Her cheeks flamed with wrath, and like a flash of lightning came the thought of the pleasure it would afford this wanton company, whose greatest delight was to gloat over the errors of their neighbours, if the knight who had brought her into this suspicious situation, or she herself, should confess

that not she, but the devout Eva, had attracted Heinz hither. What a satisfaction it would be to this reckless throng to tell such a tale of a young girl of whom the Burgravine von Zollern had said the evening before to their Uncle Pfinzing, that purity and piety had chosen Eva's lovely face for a mirror!

What if Heinz Schorlin, to save her, Els, from evil report, should confess that she was here only to rebuke his insolent intrusion into a decorous household?

This must be prevented, and Heinz seemed to understand her; for after their eyes had met, his glance of helpless enquiry told her that he would leave her to find an escape from this labyrinth.

The merry party, who now perceived that they had interrupted the nocturnal tryst of lovers, did not instantly know what to do and, as one looked enquiringly at another, an embarrassed silence followed their noisy jollity.

But the hush did not last long, and its interruption at first seemed to Els to bode the worst result; it was a peal of gay, reckless laughter, ringing from the lips of the very Cordula von Montfort, into whose eyes, as the only one of her own sex who was present, Els had just gazed with a look imploring aid.

Had Eva's aversion to the countess been justified, and was she about to take advantage of her unpleasant position to jeer at her?



Had the two quarrelled at the ball the night before, and did Cordula now perceive an opportunity to punish the younger sister by the humiliation of the older one?

Yet her laugh sounded by no means spiteful—rather, very gay and natural. The pleasant grey eyes sparkled with the most genuine mirth, and she clapped her little hands so joyously that the falcon's chain on the gauntlet of her riding glove rattled.

And what was this?

No one looks at a person whom one desires to wound with an expression of such cheerful encouragement as the look with which Cordula now gazed at Els and Heinz Schorlin, who stood by her side. True, they were at first extremely perplexed by the words she now shouted to those around her in a tone of loud exultation, as though announcing a victory; but from the beginning they felt that there was no evil purpose in them. Soon they even caught the real meaning of the countess's statement, and Els was ashamed of having feared any injury from the girl whose defender she had always been.

"Won, Sir Knight—cleverly won!" was her first sentence to Heinz.

Then, turning to Els, she asked with no less animation: "And you, my fair maid and very strict housemate, who has won the wager now? Do you still believe it is an inconceivable thought

that the modest daughter of a decorous Nuremberg race, entitled to enter the lists of a tourney, would grant a young knight a midnight meeting?" And addressing her companions, she continued, in an explanatory yet still playful tone: "She was ready to wager the beautiful brown locks which she now hides modestly under a kerchief, and even her betrothed lover's ring. It should be mine if I succeeded in leading her to commit such an abominable deed. But I was content, if I won the wager, with a smaller forfeit; yet now that I have gained it, Jungfrau Ortlieb, you must pay!"

The whole company listened in astonishment to this speech, which no one understood, but the countess, nodding mischievously to her nearest neighbours, went on:

"How bewildered you all look! It might tempt me to satisfy your curiosity less speedily, but, after the delightful entertainment you gave us, my Lord Burgrave, one becomes merciful. So you shall hear how I, as wise as the serpent, craftily forced this haughty knight"—she tapped Heinz Schorlin's arm with her riding whip—"and you, too, Jungfrau Ortlieb, whose pardon I now entreat, to help me win the bet. No offence, noble sirs! But this bet was what compelled me to drag you all from Kadolzburg and its charms so early, and induce you to attend me on the reckless ride through the moonlit night. Now accept the thanks of a lady whose heart is grateful; for your obe-

dience helped me win the wager. Look yonder at my handsome, submissive knight, Sir Heinz Schorlin, so rich in every virtue. I commanded him, on pain of my anger, to meet me at midnight at the entrance of our quarters—that is, the entry of the Ortlieb mansion; and to this modest and happy betrothed bride (may she pardon the madcap!) I represented how it troubled me and wounded my timid delicacy to enter so late at night, accompanied only by gentlemen, the house which so hospitably sheltered us, and go to my sleeping room, though I should not fear the Sultan and his mamelukes, if with this in my hand”—she motioned to her riding whip—“and my dear father at my side, I stood on my own feet which, though by no means small, are well-shod and resolute. Yet, as we are apt to measure others by our own standard, the timid, decorous girl believed me, and poor Cordula, who indeed brought only her maids and no female guardian, and therefore must dispense with being received on her return by a lady capable of commanding respect, did not appeal in vain to the charitable feelings of her beautiful housemate. She promised faithfully to come down into the entry, when the horses approached, to receive the poor lamb, surrounded by lynxes, wild-cats, foxes, and wolves, and lead it into the safe fold—if one can call this stately house by such a name. Both Sir Heinz Schorlin and Jungfrau Elizabeth Ortlieb kept their word and joined each other here—to

their extreme amazement, I should suppose, as to my knowledge they never met before—to receive me, and thus had an interview which, however loudly they may contradict it, I call a nocturnal meeting. But my wager, fair child, is won, and tomorrow you will deliver to me the exquisite carved ivory casket, while I shall keep my bracelet.”

Here she paused, paying no heed to the merry threats, exclamations of amazement, and laughter of her companions.

But while her father, striking his broad chest, cried again and again, with rapturous delight, “A paragon of a woman!” and Seitz Siebenburg, in bitter disappointment, whispered, “The fourteen saintly helpers in time of need might learn from you how to draw from the clamps what is not worth rescue and probably despaired of escape,” she was trying to give time to recover more composure her young hostess, to whom she was sincerely attached, and who, she felt sure, could have met Heinz Schorlin, who perhaps had come hither on her own account, only by some cruel chance. So she added in a quieter tone: “And now, Jungfrau Ortlieb, in sober earnest I will ask your protection and guidance through the dark house, and meanwhile you shall tell me how Sir Heinz greeted you and what passed between you, either good or bad, during the time of waiting.”

Els summoned up her courage and answered loud enough to be heard by all present: “We were

speaking of you, Countess Cordula, and the knight said——”

“I ventured to remark, Countess,” said Heinz, interrupting the new ally, “that though you might understand how to show a poor knight his folly, no kinder heart than yours throbbed under any bodice in Switzerland, Swabia, or France.”

Cordula struck him lightly on the shoulder with her riding whip, saying with a laugh: “Who permits you to peep under women’s bodices through so wide a tract of country, you scamp? Had I been in Jungfrau Ortlieb’s place I should have punished your entry into a respectable house——”

“Oh, my dear Countess,” Heinz interrupted, and his words bore so distinctly the stamp of truth and actual experience that even Sir Seitz Siebenburg was puzzled, “though I am always disposed to be grateful to you, I cannot feel a sense of obligation for this lady’s reception of me, even to the most gracious benefactress. For, by my patron saint, she forbade me the house as if I were a thief and a burglar.”

“And she was right!” exclaimed the countess. “I would have treated you still more harshly. Only you would have spared yourself many a sharp word had you confessed at once that it was I who summoned you here. I’ll talk with you to-morrow, and—— Am I not right, Jungfrau Els—you won’t make him suffer for losing the wager,

but exercise your domestic authority after a more gentle fashion?"

While speaking, she looked at Els with a glance so full of meaning that the young girl's cheeks crimsoned, and the longing to put an end to this deceitful game became almost uncontrollable. The thought of Eva alone sealed her lips.

## CHAPTER X.

ONE person only besides Sir Seitz Siebenburg had not been deceived—the young knight Boemund Altrosen, whose love for Cordula was genuine, and who, by its unerring instinct, felt that she had invented her tale and for a purpose which did honour to her kindness of heart. So his calm black eyes rested upon the woman he loved with proud delight, while Seitz Siebenburg twisted his mustache fiercely. Not a look or movement of either of the two girls had escaped his notice, and Cordula's bold interference in behalf of the reckless Swiss knight, who now seemed to have ensnared his future sister-in-law also, increased the envy and jealousy which tortured him until he was forced to exert the utmost self-restraint in order not to tell the countess to her face that he, at least, was far from being deceived by such a fable. Yet he succeeded in controlling himself. But as he forced his lips to silence he gazed with the most open scorn at the bales of merchandise heaped around him. He would show the others that, though the husband of a merchant's daughter, he retained the prejudices of his knightly rank.

But no one heeded the disagreeable fellow, who had no intimate friends in the group. Most of the company were pressing round Heinz Schorlin with jests and questions, but bluff Count von Montfort warmly clasped Els's hand, while he apologised for the bold jest of his young daughter who, in spite of her recklessness, meant kindly.

Nothing could have been more unwelcome to a girl in so unpleasant a situation than this delay. She longed most ardently to get away but, ere she succeeded in escaping from the friendly old noble, two gentlemen hastily entered the brightly lighted entry, at sight of whom her heart seemed to stop beating.

The old count, who noticed her blanched face, released her, asking sympathisingly what troubled her, but Els did not hear him.

When she felt him loose her hand she would fain have fled up the stairs to her mother and sister, to avoid the discussions which must now follow. But she knew into what violent outbursts of sudden anger her usually prudent father could be hurried if there was no one at hand to warn him.

There he stood in the doorway, his stern, gloomy expression forming a strange contrast to the merry party who had entered in such a jovial mood.

His companion, Herr Casper Eysvogel, had already noticed his future daughter-in-law, recognised her by an amazed shrug of the shoulders which was anything but a friendly greeting, and



now eyed the excited revellers with a look as grave and repellent as that of the owner of the house.

Herr Casper's unusual height permitted him to gaze over the heads of the party though, with the exception of Count von Montfort, they were all tall, nay, remarkably tall men, and the delicacy of his clear-cut, pallid, beardless face had never seemed to Els handsomer or more sinister. True, he was the father of her Wolff, but the son resembled this cold-hearted man only in his unusual stature, and a chill ran through her veins as she felt the stately old merchant's blue eyes, still keen and glittering, rest upon her.

On the day of her betrothal she had rushed into his arms with a warm and grateful heart, and he had kissed her, as custom dictated; but it was done in a strange way—his thin, well-cut lips had barely brushed her brow. Then he stepped back and turned to his wife with the low command, "It is your turn now, Rosalinde." Her future mother-in-law rose quickly, and doubtless intended to embrace her affectionately, but a loud cough from her own mother seemed to check her, for ere she opened her arms to Els she turned to her and excused her act by the words, "He wishes it." Yet Els was finally clasped in Frau Rosalinde's arms and kissed more warmly than—from what had previously occurred—she had expected.

Wolff's grandmother, old Countess Rotterbach, who rarely left the huge gilt armchair in her

daughter's sitting-room, had watched the whole scene with a scornful smile; then, thrusting her prominent chin still farther forward, she said to her daughter, loud enough for Els to hear, "This into the bargain?"

All these things returned to the young girl's memory as she gazed at the cold, statuesque face of her lover's father. It seemed as if he held his tall, noble figure more haughtily erect than usual, and that his plain dark garments were of richer material and more faultless cut than ever; nay, she even fancied that, like the lion, which crouches and strains every muscle ere it springs upon its victim, he was summoning all his pride and sternness to crush her.

Els was innocent; nay, the motive which had brought her here to defend her sister could not fail to be approved by every well-disposed person, and certainly not last by her father, and it would have suited her truthful nature to contradict openly Countess Cordula's friendly falsehood had not her dread of fatally exposing Eva imposed silence.

How her father's cheeks glowed already! With increasing anxiety, she attributed it to the indignation which overpowered him, yet he was only heated by the haste with which, accompanied by his future son-in-law's father, he had rushed here from the Frauenthor as fast as his feet would carry him.

Casper Eysvogel had also attended the Vorchtel

entertainment and accompanied Ernst Ortlieb into the street to discuss some business matters.

He intended to persuade him to advance the capital for which he had just vainly asked Herr Vorchtel. He stood in most urgent need for the next few days of this great sum, of which his son and business partner must have no knowledge, and at first Wolff Eysvogel's future father-in-law saw no reason to refuse. But Herr Ernst was a cautious man, and when his companion imposed the condition that his son should be kept in ignorance of the loan, he was puzzled. He wished to learn why the business partner should not know what must be recorded in the books of the house; but Casper Eysvogel needed this capital to silence the Jew Pfefferkorn, from whom he had secretly borrowed large sums to conceal the heavy losses sustained in Venice the year before at the gaming table.

At first courteously, then with rising anger, he evaded the questions of the business man, and his manner of doing so, with the little contradictions in which the arrogant man, unaccustomed to falsehood, involved himself, showed Herr Ernst that all was not as it should be.

By the time they reached the Frauenthor, he had told Casper Eysvogel positively that he would not fulfil the request until Wolff was informed of the matter.

Then the sorely pressed man perceived that

nothing but a frank confession could lead him to his goal. But what an advantage it would give his companion, what a humiliation it would impose upon himself! He could not force his lips to utter it, but resolved to venture a last essay by appealing to the father, instead of to the business man; and therefore, with the haughty, condescending manner natural to him, he asked Herr Ernst, as if it were his final word, whether he had considered that his refusal of a request, which twenty other men would deem it an honour to fulfil, might give their relations a form very undesirable both to his daughter and himself?

"No, I did not suppose that a necessity," replied his companion firmly, and then added in an irritated tone: "But if you need the loan so much that you require for your son a father-in-law who will advance it to you more readily, why, then, Herr Casper——"

Here he paused abruptly. A flood of light streamed into the street from the doorway of the Ortlieb house. It must be a fire, and with the startled cry, "St. Florian aid us! my entry is burning!" he rushed forward with his companion to the endangered house so quickly that the torchbearers, who even in this bright night did good service in the narrow streets, whose lofty houses barred out the moonlight, could scarcely follow.

Thus Herr Ernst, far more anxious about his invalid, helpless wife than his imperilled wares,

soon reached his own door. His companion crossed the threshold close behind him, sullen, deeply incensed, and determined to order his son to choose between his love and favour and the daughter of this unfriendly man, whom only a sudden accident had prevented from breaking the betrothal.

The sight of so many torches blazing here was an exasperating spectacle to Ernst Ortlieb, who with wise caution and love of order insisted that nothing but lanterns should be used to light his house, which contained inflammable wares of great value; but other things disturbed his composure, already wavering, to an even greater degree.

What was his Els doing at this hour among these gentlemen, all of whom were strangers?

Without heeding them or the countess, he was hastening towards her to obtain a solution of this enigma, but the young Burgrave Eitelfritz von Zollern, the Knight of Altrosen, Cordula von Montfort, and others barred his way by greeting him and eagerly entreating him to pardon their intrusion at so late an hour.

Having no alternative, he curtly assented, and was somewhat soothed as he saw old Count von Montfort, who was still standing beside Els, engaged in an animated conversation with her. His daughter's presence was probably due to that of the guests quartered in his home, especially Cordula, whom, since she disturbed the peace of his quiet household night after night, he regarded as

the personification of restlessness and reckless freedom. He would have preferred to pass her unnoticed, but she had clung to his arm and was trying, with coaxing graciousness, to soften his indignation by gaily relating how she had come here and what had detained her and her companions. But Ernst Ortlieb, who would usually have been very susceptible to such an advance from a young and aristocratic lady, could not now succeed in smoothing his brow. In his excitement he was not even able to grasp the meaning of the story she related merrily, though with well-feigned contrition. While listening to her with one ear, he was straining the other to catch what Sir Seitz Siebenburg was saying to his father-in-law, Casper Eysvogel.

He gathered from Countess Cordula's account that she had succeeded in playing some bold prank in connection with Els and the Swiss knight Heinz Schorlin, and the words "the Mustache" was whispering to his father-in-law—the direction of his glance betrayed it—also referred to Els and the Swiss. But the less Herr Ernst heard of this conversation the more painfully it excited his already perturbed spirit.

Suddenly his pleasant features, which, on account of the lady at his side, he had hitherto forced to wear a gracious aspect, assumed an expression which filled the reckless countess with grave anxiety, and urged the terrified Els, who

had not turned her eyes from him, to a hasty resolution. That was her father's look when on the point of an outbreak of fury, and at this hour, surrounded by these people, he must not allow himself to yield to rage; he must maintain a tolerable degree of composure.

Without heeding the young Burgrave Eitelfritz or Sir Boemund Altrosen, who were just approaching her, she forced her way nearer to her father. He still maintained his self-control, but already the veins on his brow had swollen and his short figure was rigidly erect. The cause of his excitement—she had noticed it—was some word uttered by Seitz Siebenburg. Her father was the only person who had understood it, but she was not mistaken in the conjecture that it referred to her and the Swiss knight, and she believed it to be base and spiteful.

In fact, after his father-in-law had told him that Ernst Ortlieb thought his house was on fire, "the Mustache," in reply to Herr Casper's enquiry how his son's betrothed bride happened to be there, answered scornfully: "Els? She did not hasten hither, like the old man, to put the fire out, but because one flame was not enough for her. Wolff must know it to-morrow. By day the slender little flame of honourable betrothed love flickers for him; by night it blazes more brightly for yonder Swiss scoundrel. And the young lady chooses for the scene of this toying with fire the easily ignited warehouse of her own father!"

"I will secure mine against such risks," Casper Eysvogel answered; then, casting a contemptuous glance at Els and a wrathful one at the Swiss knight, he added with angry resolution: "It is not yet too late. So long as I am myself no one shall bring peril and disgrace upon my house and my son."

Then Herr Ernst had suddenly become aware of the suspicion with which his beautiful, brave, self-sacrificing child was regarded. Pale as death, he struggled for composure, and when his eyes met the imploring gaze of the basely defamed girl, he said to himself that he must maintain his self-control in order not to afford the frivolous revelers who surrounded him an entertaining spectacle.

Wolff was dear to him, but before he would have led his Els to the house where the miserable "Mustache" lived, and whose head was the cold-hearted, gloomy man whose words had just struck him like a poisoned arrow, he, whom the Lord had bereft of his beloved, gallant son, would have been ready to deprive himself of his daughters also and take both to the convent. Eva longed to go, and Els might find there a new and beautiful happiness, like his sister, the Abbess Kunigunde. In the Eysvogel house, never!

During these hasty reflections Els extended her hand toward him, and the shining gold circlet which her lover had placed on her ring finger glittered in



the torchlight. A thought darted through his brain with the speed of lightning, and without hesitation he drew the ring from the hand of his astonished daughter, whispering curtly, yet tenderly, in reply to her anxious cry, "What are you doing?" "Trust me, child."

Then hastily approaching Casper Eysvogel, he beckoned to him to move a little aside from the group.

The other followed, believing that Herr Ernst would now promise the sum requested, yet firmly resolved, much as he needed it, to refuse.

Ernst Ortlieb, however, made no allusion to business matters, but with a swift gesture handed him the ring which united their two children. Then, after a rapid glance around had assured him that no one had followed them, he whispered to Herr Casper: "Tell your Wolff that he was, and would have remained, dear to us; but my daughter seems to me too good for his father's house and for kindred who fear that she will bring injury and shame upon them. Your wish is fulfilled. I hereby break the betrothal."

"And, in so doing, you only anticipate the step which I intended to take with more cogent motives," replied Casper Eysvogel with cool composure, shrugging his shoulders contemptuously. "The city will judge to-morrow which of the two parties was compelled to sever a bond sacred in the sight of God and men. Unfortunately, it is

impossible for me to give your daughter the good opinion you cherish of my son."

Drawing his stately figure to its full height as he spoke, he gazed at his diminutive adversary with a look of haughty contempt and, without vouchsafing a word in farewell, turned his back upon him.

Repressed fury was seething in Ernst Orlieb's breast, and he would scarcely have succeeded in controlling himself longer but for the consolation afforded by the thought that every tie was sundered between his daughter and this cold, arrogant, unjust man and his haughty, evil-disposed kindred. But when he again looked for the daughter on whom his hasty act had doubtless inflicted a severe blow, she was no longer visible.

Directly after he took the ring she had glided silently, unnoticed by most of the company, up the stairs to the second story. Cordula von Montfort told him this in a low tone.

Els had made no answer to her questions, but her imploring, tearful eyes pierced the young countess to the heart. Her quick ear had caught Siebenburg's malicious words and Casper Eysvogel's harsh response and, with deep pity, she felt how keenly the poor girl must suffer.

The happiness of a whole life destroyed without any fault of her own! From their first meeting Els had seemed to her incapable of any careless error, and she had merely tried, by her bold inter-

ference, to protect her from the gossip of evil tongues. But Heinz Schorlin had just approached and whispered that, by his knightly honour, Els was a total stranger to him, and he only wished he might find his own dear sister at home as pure and free from any fault.

Poor child! But the countess knew who had frustrated her intervention in behalf of Els. It was Sir Seitz Siebenburg, "the Mustache," whose officious homage, at first amusing, had long since become repulsive. Her heart shrank from the thought that, merely from vain pleasure in having a throng of admirers, she had given this scoundrel more than one glance of encouragement. The riding whip fairly quivered in her right hand as, after informing Ernst Ortlieb where Els had gone, she warned the gentlemen that it was time to depart, and Seitz Siebenburg submissively, yet as familiarly as if he had a right to her special favour, held out his hand in farewell.

But Countess Cordula withdrew hers with visible dislike, saying in a tone of chilling repulse: "Remember me to your wife, Sir Knight. Tell her to take care that her twin sons resemble their father as little as possible."

"Then you want to have two ardent admirers the less?" asked Siebenburg gaily, supposing that the countess's remark was a jest.

But when she did not, as he expected, give these insulting words an interpretation favourable

to him, but merely shrugged her shoulders scornfully, he added, glancing fiercely at the Swiss knight:

"True, you would doubtless be better pleased should the boys grow up to resemble the lucky Sir Heinz Schorlin, for whose sake you proved yourself the inventor of tales more marvellous, if not more credible, than the most skilful travelling minstrel."

"Perhaps so," replied the countess with contemptuous brevity. "But I should be satisfied if the twins—and this agrees with my first wish—should grow up honest men. If you should pay me the honour of a visit during the next few days, Sir Seitz, I could not receive it."

With these words she turned away, paying no further heed to him, though he called her name aloud, as if half frantic.

## CHAPTER XI.

It was after midnight when the servants closed the heavy door of the Ortlieb mansion. The late guests had left it, mounted their horses, and ridden away together through the Frauenthor into the city.

The moon no longer lighted their way. A sultry wind had swept from the southwest masses of grey clouds, which constantly grew denser and darker. Heinz Schorlin did not notice it, but his follower, Biberli, called his attention to the rising storm and entreated him to choose the nearest road to the city. To remain outside the gate in such darkness would be uncomfortable, nay, perhaps not without peril, but the knight merely flung him the peevish answer, "So much the better," and, to Biberli's surprise, turned into St. Klarengasse, which brought him by no means nearer to his distant lodgings in the Bindergasse.

It was unfortunate to be warmly devoted to a master who had no fear, whom he was obliged to serve as a messenger of love, and who now probably scarcely knew himself whither this love would lead him.

But true and steadfast Biberli would really have followed Sir Heinz, not only in a dangerous nocturnal ramble, but through all the terrors of hell. So he only glanced down at his long, lean legs, which would be exposed here to the bites of the dogs, with whom he stood on especially bad terms, raised his long robe higher, as the paths over which they must pass were of doubtful cleanliness, and deemed it a good omen when his foot struck against a stout stick, which his patron saint had perhaps thrown in his way as a weapon. Its possession was somewhat soothing, it is true, yet he did not regain the pleasant consciousness of peace in which his soul had rejoiced a few short hours before.

He knew what to expect from the irritable mood into which recent events appeared to have thrown his master. Heinz usually soon forgot any such trivial disappointment, but the difficulty threatening himself and Kätterle was far worse—nay, might even assume terrible proportions.

These alarming thoughts made him sigh so deeply that Heinz turned towards him.

He would gladly have relieved his own troubled breast in the same way. Never before had the soul of this light-hearted child of good fortune served as the arena for so fierce a struggle of contending emotions.

He loved Eva, and the image of her white, supernaturally beautiful figure, flooded by the moon-

light, still stood before him as distinctly as when, after her disappearance, he had resolved to plead his suit for her to her sister; but the usually reckless fellow asked himself, shuddering, what would have happened had he obeyed Eva's summons and been found with her, as he had just been surprised with her sister. She was not wholly free from guilt, for her note had really contained an invitation to a meeting; yet she escaped. But his needless impetuosity and her sudden appearance before the house had placed her modest, charming sister, the betrothed bride of the gallant fellow who had fought with him in the Marchfield, in danger of being misunderstood and despised. If the finger of scorn were pointed at her, if a stain rested on her fair fame, the austere Wolff Eysvogel would hardly desire to make her his wife, and then this also would be his fault.

His kind, honest heart suffered keenly under these self-accusations, the first which he had ever heeded.

Hitherto the volatile young fellow, who had often gaily risked his life in battle and his last penny at the gaming table, had never thought of seriously examining his own soul, battling by his own strength of will against some secret longing and shunning its cause. On the contrary, from childhood he had accustomed himself to rely on the protection and aid of the Virgin and the saints; and when they passed the image with the ever-

burning lamp, where Kätterle had just sought and found consolation, he implored it not to let his bold intrusion into the home of the maiden he loved bring evil upon her and her sister. He also vowed to the convent and its saint—which, come what might, should also be his—a rich gift whenever the Emperor or the gaming table again filled his purse.

The thought of being burdened his whole life long with the reproach of having made two such charming, innocent creatures miserable seemed unendurable. He would gladly have given gold and blood to remove it.

It was too late that day, but he resolved to go to the confessional on the morrow, for absolution had always relieved and lightened his heart. But how trivial his errors had been! True, the wrong he had now committed was not a mortal sin, and would hardly impose a severe penance upon him, yet it burdened him like the most infamous crime. He did not understand himself, and often wondered why he, reckless Heinz, thus made a mountain out of a molehill. Yet when, after this reflection, he uttered a sigh of relief, it seemed as if a voice within commanded him not to think lightly of what had passed, for on that evening he had ceased to bestow pleasure on every one, and instead of, as usual, being helpful and agreeable, he had plunged others who had done him no wrong—nay, perhaps a whole household, whose



daughter had given him the first love of her young heart—into misery and disgrace. Had he considered the consequences of his act, he would still be merry Heinz. Then he remembered how, when a boy, playing with other lads high up among the mountains just as it was beginning to thaw, he had hurled the work they had finished with so much toil, a snow man, down the slope, rejoicing with his playfellows over its swift descent towards the valley, until they noticed with what frightful speed its bulk increased as it sped over its snowy road, till at last, like a terrible avalanche, it swept away a herdman's hut—fortunately an empty one. Now, also, his heedlessness had set in motion a mass which constantly rolled onward, and how terrible might be the harm it would do!

If Hartmann, the Emperor's son, were only there! He confided everything to him, for he was sure of his silence. Both his duty as a knight and his conscience forbade him to relate his experiences and ask counsel from any one else.

He was still absorbed in these gloomy thoughts when, just before reaching the Walch, he heard Biberli's deep sigh. Here, behind and beside the frames of the cloth weavers, stood the tents before which the followers and soldiers of the princes and dignitaries who had come to the Reichstag were still sitting around the camp fire, carousing and laughing.

Any interruption was welcome to him, and to Biberli it seemed like a deliverance to be permitted to use his poor endangered tongue, for his master had asked what grief oppressed him.

"If you desired to know what trouble did not burden my soul I could find a speedier answer," replied Biberli piteously. "Oh, this night, my lord! What has it not brought upon us and others! Look at the black clouds rising in the south. They are like the dark days impending over us poor mortals."

Then he confided to Heinz his fears for himself and Kätterle. The knight's assurance that he would intercede for him and, if necessary, even appeal to the Emperor's favour, somewhat cheered his servitor's drooping spirits, it is true, but by no means restored his composure, and his tone was lugubrious enough as he went on :

"And the poor innocent girl in the Ortlieb house! Your little lady, my lord, broke the bread she must now eat herself, but the other, the older E."

"I know," interrupted the knight sorrowfully. "But if the gracious Virgin aids us, they will continue to believe in the wager Cordula von Montfort——"

"She! she!" Biberli exclaimed, enthusiastically waving his stick aloft. "The Lord created her in a good hour. Such a heart! Such friendly kindness! And to think that she interposed so

graciously for you—you, Sir Heinz, to whom she showed the favour of combing your locks, as if you were already her promised husband, and who afterwards, for another's sake, left her at the ball as if she wore a fern cap and had become invisible. I saw the whole from the musician's gallery. True, the somnambulist is marvellously beautiful."

But the knight interrupted him by exclaiming so vehemently "Silence!" that he paused.

Both walked on without speaking for some distance ere Heinz began again :

"Even though I live to grow old and grey, never shall I behold aught more beautiful than the vision of that white-robed girlish figure on the stairs."

True and steadfast Biberli sighed faintly. Love for Eva Ortlieb held his master as if in a vise; but a Schorlin seemed to him far too good a match for a Nuremberg maiden who had grown up among sacks of pepper and chests of goods and, moreover, was a somnambulist. He looked higher for his Heinz, and had already found the right match for him. So, turning to him again, he said earnestly :

"Drive the bewitching vision from your mind, Sir Heinz. You don't know—but I could tell you some tales about women who walk in their sleep by moonlight."

"Well?" asked Heinz eagerly.

"As a maiden," Biberli continued impressively,

with the pious intention of guarding his master from injury, "the somnambulist merely runs the risk of falling from the roof, or whatever accident may happen to a sleepwalker; but if she enters the estate of holy matrimony, the evil power which has dominion over her sooner or later transforms her at midnight into a *troll*, which seizes her husband's throat in his sleep and strangles him."

"Nursery tales!" cried Heinz angrily, but Biberli answered calmly:

"It can make no difference to you what occurs in the case of such possessed women, for henceforward the Ortlieb house will be closed against you. And—begging your pardon—it is fortunate. For, my lord, the horse mounted by the first Schorlin—the chaplain showed it to you in the picture—came from the ark in which Noah saved it with the other animals from the deluge, and the first Lady Schorlin whom the family chronicles mention was a countess. Your ancestresses came from citadels and castles; no Schorlin ever yet brought his bride from a tradesman's house. You, the proudest of them all, will scarcely think of making such an error, though it is true——"

"Ernst Ortlieb, spite of his trade, is a man of knightly lineage, to whom the king of arms opens the lists at every tournament!" exclaimed Heinz indignantly.

"In the combat with blunt weapons," replied Biberli contemptuously.

"Nay, for the jousts and single combat," cried Heinz excitedly. "The Emperor Frederick himself dubbed Herr Ernst a knight."

"You know best," replied Biberli modestly. "But his coat of arms, like his entry, smells of cloves and pepper. Here is another, however, who, like your first-ancestress, has a countess's title, and who has a right—— My name isn't Biberli if your lady mother at home would not be more than happy were I to inform her that the Countess von Montfort and the darling of her heart, which you are——"

"The name of Montfort and what goes with it," Heinz interrupted, "would surely please those at home. But the rest! Where could a girl be found who, setting aside Cordula's kind heart, would be so great a contrast to my mother in every respect?"

"Stormy mornings merge into quiet days," said the servant. "Everything depends, my lord, upon the heart of which you speak so slightly—— the heart and, even above that, upon the blood. 'Help is needed there,' cried the kind heart just now, and then the blood did its *devoir*. The act followed the desire as the sound follows the blow of the hammer, the thunder the flash of lightning. Well for the castle that is ruled by such a mistress! I am only the servant, and respect commands me to curb my tongue; but to-day I had news from home through the Provost Werner, of Lucerne,

whom I knew at Stansstadt. I meant to tell you of it over the wine at the Thirsty Troopers, but that accursed note and the misfortune which followed prevented. It will not make either of us more cheerful, but whoever is ordered by the leech to drink gall and wormwood does wisely to swallow the dose at one gulp. Do you wish to empty the cup now?"

The knight nodded assent, and Biberli went on. "Home affairs are not going as they ought. Though your uncle's hair is already grey, the knightly blood in his veins makes him grasp the sword too quickly. The quarrel about the bridge-toll has broken out again more violently than ever. The townsfolk drove off our cattle as security and, by way of punishment, your uncle seized the goods of their merchants, and they came to blows. True, the Schorlin retainers forced back the men from town with bloody heads, but if the feud lasts much longer we cannot hold out, for the others have the money, and since the war cry has sounded less frequently there has been no lack of men at arms who will serve any one who pays. Besides, the townsfolk can appeal to the treaty of peace, and if your uncle continues to seize the merchant's wares they will apply to the imperial magistrate, and then——"

"Then," cried Heinz eagerly, "then the time will have come for me to leave the court and return home to look after my rights."

"A single arm, no matter how strong it may be, can avail nothing there, my lord," Biberli protested earnestly. "Your Uncle Ramsweg has scarcely his peer as a leader, but even were it not so you could not bring yourself to send the old man home and put yourself in his place. Besides, it would be as unwise as it is unjust. What is lacking at home is money to pay the town what it demands for the use of the bridge, or to increase the number of your men, and therefore——"

"Well?" asked Heinz eagerly.

"Therefore seek the Countess von Montfort, who favours you above every one else," was the reply; "for with her all you need will be yours without effort. Her dowry will suffice to settle twenty such bridge dues, and if it should come to a fray, the brave huntress will ride to the field at your side with helmet and spear. Which of the four Fs did Countess Cordula von Montfort ever lack?"

"The four Fs?" asked Heinz, listening intently.

"The Fs," explained the ex-pedagogue, "are the four letters which marriageable knights should consider. They are: Family, figure, favour, and fortune. But hold your cap on! What a hot blast this is, as if the storm were coming straight from the jaws of hell. And the dust! Where did all these withered leaves come from in the month of June? They are whirling about as if the foliage had already fallen. There are big raindrops driv-

ing into my face too—— B-r-r! You need all four Fs. No rain will wash a single one of them away, and I hope it won't efface the least word of my speech either. What, according to human foresight, could be lacking to secure the fairest happiness, if you and the countess——"

"Love," replied Heinz Schorlin curtly.

"That will come of itself," cried Biberli, as if sure of what he was saying, "if the bride is Countess Cordula."

"Possibly," answered the knight, "but the heart must not be filled by another's image."

Here he paused, for in the darkness he had stumbled into the ditch by the road.

The whirlwind which preceded the bursting of the storm blew such clouds of dust and everything it contained into their faces that it was difficult to advance. But Biberli was glad, for he had not yet found a fitting answer. He struggled silently on beside his master against the wind, until it suddenly subsided, and a violent storm of rain streamed in big warm drops on the thirsty earth and the be-lated pedestrians. Then, spite of Heinz's protestations, Biberli hurriedly snatched the long robe embroidered with the St from his shoulders and threw it over his master, declaring that his shirt was as safe from injury as his skin, but the rain would ruin the knight's delicate embroidered doublet.

Then he drew over his head the hood which hung from his coat, and meanwhile must have de-



cided upon an answer, for as soon as they moved on he began again: "You must drive your love for the beautiful sleepwalker out of your mind. Try to do so, my dear, dear master, for the sake of your lady mother, your young sister who will soon be old enough to marry, our light-hearted Maria, and the good old castle. For your own happiness, your lofty career, which began so gloriously, you must hear me! O master, my dear master, tear from your heart the image of the little Nuremberg witch, tempting though it is, I admit. The wound will bleed for a brief time, but after so much mirthful pleasure a fleeting disappointment in love, I should think, would not be too hard to bear if it will be speedily followed by the fairest and most enduring happiness."

Here a flash of lightning, which illumined the hospital door close before them, and made every surrounding object as bright as day, interrupted the affectionate entreaty of the faithful fellow, and at the same time a tremendous peal of thunder crashed and rattled through the air.

Master and servant crossed themselves, but Heinz exclaimed:

"That struck the tower yonder. A little farther to the left, and all doubts and misgivings would have been ended."

"You can say that!" exclaimed Biberli reproachfully while passing with his master through the gate which had just been opened for an imperial

messenger. "And you dare to make such a speech in the midst of this heavenly wrath! For the sake of a pair of lovely eyes you are ready to execrate a life which the saints have so blessed with every gift that thousands and tens of thousands would not give it up from sheer gratitude and joy, even if it were not a blasphemous crime!"

Again the lightning and thunder drowned his words. Biberli's heart trembled, and muttering prayers beseeching protection from the avenging hand above, he walked swiftly onward till they reached the Corn Market. Here they were again stopped, for, notwithstanding the late hour, a throng of people, shouting and wailing, was just pouring from the Ledergasse into the square, headed by a night watchman provided with spear, horn, and lantern, a bailiff, torchbearers, and some police officers, who were vainly trying to silence the loudest outcries.

Again a brilliant flash of lightning pierced the black mass of clouds, and Heinz, shuddering, pointed to the crowd and asked, "Do you suppose the lightning killed the man whom they are carrying yonder?"

"Let me see," replied Biberli, among whose small vices curiosity was by no means the least. He must have understood news gathering thoroughly, for he soon returned and informed Heinz, who had sought shelter from the rain under the broad bow window of a lofty house, that the bear-

ers were just carrying to his parents' home a young man whose thread of life had been suddenly severed by a stab through the breast in a duel. After the witnesses had taken the corpse to the leech Otto, in the Ledergasse, and the latter said that the youth was dead, they had quickly dispersed, fearing a severe punishment on account of the breach of the peace. The murdered man was Ulrich Vorchtel, the oldest son of the wealthy Berthold Vorchel, who collected the imperial taxes.

Again Heinz shuddered. He had seen the unfortunate young man the day before yesterday at the fencing school, and yesterday, full of overflowing mirth, at the dance, and knew that he, too, had fought in the battle of Marchfield. His foe must have been master of the art of wielding the sword, for the dead man had been a skilful fencer, and was tall and stalwart in figure.

When the servant ended his story Heinz stood still in the darkness for a time, silently listening. The bells had begun to ring, the blast of the watchman's horn blended with the wailing notes summoning aid, and in two places—near the Thiergartenthor and the Frauenthor—the sky was crimsoned by the reflection of a conflagration, probably kindled by some flash of lightning, which flickered over the clouds, alternately rising and falling, sometimes deeper and anon paler in hue. Throngs of people, shouting "Fire!" pressed from

the cross streets into the square. The stillness of the night was over.

When Heinz again turned to Biberli he said in a hollow tone:

"If the earth should swallow up Nuremberg to-night it would not surprise me. But over yonder—look, Biber, the Duke of Pomerania's quarters in the Green Shield are still lighted. I'll wager that they are yet at the gaming table. A plague upon it! I would be there, too, if my purse allowed. I feel as if yonder dead man and his coffin were burdening my soul. If it was really good fortune in love that snatched the zecchins from my purse yesterday——"

"Then," cried Biberli eagerly, "to-night is the very time, ere Countess Cordula teaches you to forget what troubles you, to win them back. The gold for the first stake is at your disposal."

"From the Duke of Pomerania, you think?" asked Heinz; then, in a quick, resolute tone, added: "No! Often as the duke has offered me his purse, I never borrow from my peers when the prospect of repayment looks so uncertain."

"Gently, my lord," returned Biberli, slapping his belt importantly. "Here is what you need for the stake as your own property. No miracles have been wrought for us, only I forgot—— But look! There are the black clouds rolling north-

ward over the castle. That was a frightful storm! But a spendthrift doesn't keep house long—and the thunder has not yet followed that last flash of lightning. There is plenty of uproar without it. It's hard work to hear one's self speak amid all the ringing, trumpeting, yelling, and shrieking. It seems as if they expected to put out the fire with noise. The fathers of the city can attend to that. It doesn't appear to disturb the duke and his guests at their dice; and here, my lord, are fifty florins which, I think, will do for the beginning."

Biberli handed the knight a little bag containing this sum, and when Heinz asked in perplexity where he obtained it, the ex-schoolmaster answered gaily: "They came just in the nick of time. I received them from Süss, the jockey, while you were out riding this afternoon."

"For the black?" Heinz enquired.

"Certainly, my lord. It's a pity about the splendid stallion. But, as you know, he has the staggers, and when I struck him on the coronet he stood as if rooted to the earth, and the equerry, who was there, said that the disease was proved. So the Jew silently submitted, let the horse be led away, and paid back what we gave him. Fifty heavy florins! More than enough for a beginning. If I may advise you, count on the two and the five when fixed numbers are to be thrown or hit. Why? Because you must turn your ill luck in love to ad-

vantage; and those from whom it comes are the two beautiful Ortlieb Es, as Nuremberg folk call the ladies Els and Eva. That makes the two. But E is the fifth letter in the alphabet, so I should choose the five. If Biberli did not put things together shrewdly——”

“He would be as oversharpe as he has often been already,” Heinz interrupted, but he patted Biberli’s wet arm as he spoke, and added kindly: “Yet every day proves that my Biberli is a true and steadfast fellow; but where in the wide world did you, a schoolmaster, gain instruction in the art of throwing the dice?”

“While we were studying in Paris, with my dead foster brother,” replied the servant with evident emotion. “But now go up, my lord, before the fire alarm, and I know not what else, makes the people upstairs separate. The iron must be forged during this wild night. Only a few drops of rain are falling. You can cross the street dry even without my long garment.”

While speaking he divested the knight of his robe, and continued eagerly: “Now, my lord, from the coffin, or let us say rather the leaden weight, which oppresses your soul, let a bolt be melted that will strike misfortune to the heart. Glittering gold has a cheering colour.”

“Stop! stop!” Heinz interrupted positively. “No good wishes on the eve of hunting or gaming.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THE thunderclouds had gathered in the blackest masses above the Frauenthor and the Ortlieb mansion. Ere the storm burst the oppressive atmosphere had burdened the hearts within as heavily as it weighed outside upon tree, bush, and all animated creation.

In the servants' rooms under the roof the maid slept quietly and dreamlessly; and the men, with their mouths wide open, snored after the labour of the day, unconscious of what was passing outside in the sky or the events within which had destroyed the peace of their master and his family.

The only bed unoccupied was the one in the little room next to the stairs leading to the garret, which was occupied by Kätterle. The Swiss, kneeling before it with her face buried in the coarse linen pillow case, alternately sobbed, prayed, and cursed herself and her recklessness.

When the gale, which preceded the thunderstorm, blew leaves and straws in through the open window she started violently, imagining that Herr Ortlieb had come to call her to account and her



trial was to begin. The barber's widow, whom she had seen a few days before in the pillory, with a stone around her neck, because she had allowed a cloth weaver's heedless daughter to come to her lodging with a handsome trumpeter who belonged to the city musicians, rose before her mental vision. How the poor thing had trembled and moaned after the executioner's assistant hung the heavy stone around her neck! Then, driven frantic by the jeers and insults of the people, the missiles flung by the street boys, and the unbearable burden, she could control herself no longer but, pouring forth a flood of curses, thrust out her tongue at her tormentors.

What a spectacle! But ere she, Kätterle, would submit to such disgrace she would bid farewell to life with all its joys; and even to the countryman to whom her heart clung, and who, spite of his well-proven truth and steadfastness, had brought misery upon her.

Now the memory of the hateful word which she, too, had called to the barber's widow weighed heavily on her heart. Never, never again would she be arrogant to a neighbour who had fallen into misfortune.

This vow, and many others, she made to St. Clare; then her thoughts wandered to the city moat, to the Pegnitz, the Fischbach, and all the other streams in and near Nuremberg, where it was possible to drown and thus escape the terrible disgrace which

threatened her. But in so doing she had doubtless committed a heavy sin; for while recalling the Dutzen Pond, from whose dark surface she had often gathered white water lilies after passing through the Frauenthor into the open fields, and wondering in what part of its reedy shore her design could be most easily executed, a brilliant flash of lightning blazed through her room, and at the same time a peal of thunder shook the old mansion to its foundations.

That was meant for her and her wicked thoughts. No! For the sake of escaping disgrace here on earth, she dared not trifle with eternal salvation and the hope of seeing her dead mother in the other world.

The remembrance of that dear mother, who had laboured so earnestly to train her in every good path, soothed her. Surely she was looking down upon her and knew that she had remained upright and honest, that she had not defrauded her employers of even a pin, and that the little fault which was to be so grievously punished had been committed solely out of love for her countryman, who in his truth and steadfastness meant honestly by her. What Biberli requested her to do could be no heavy sin.

But the powers above seemed to be of a different opinion; for again a dazzling glare of light illumined the room, and the crash and rattle of the thunder of the angry heavens accompanied it

with a deafening din. Kätterle shrieked aloud; it seemed as if the gates of hell had opened before her, or the destruction of the world had begun.

Frantic with terror, she sprang back from the window, through which the raindrops were already sprinkling her face. They cooled her flushed cheeks and brought her back to reality. The offence she had just committed was no trivial one. She, whom Herr Ortlieb, with entire confidence, had placed in the service of the fair young girl whose invalid mother could not care for her, had permitted herself to be induced to persuade Eva, who was scarcely beyond childhood, to a rendezvous with a man whom she represented to the inexperienced maiden as a godly, virtuous knight, though she knew from Biberli how far the latter surpassed his master in fidelity and steadfastness.

"Lead us not into temptation!" How often she had repeated the words in the Lord's Prayer, and now she herself had become the serpent that tempted into sin the innocent child whom duty should have commanded her to guard.

No, no! The guilt for which she was threatened with punishment was by no means small, and even if her earthly judge did not call her to account, she would go to confession to-morrow and honestly perform the penance imposed.

Moved by these thoughts, she gazed across the courtyard to the convent. Just at that moment the lightning again flashed, the thunder pealed,

and she covered her face with her hands. When she lowered her arms she saw on the roof of the nuns' granary, which adjoined the cow-stable, a slender column of smoke, followed by a narrow tongue of flame, which grew steadily brighter.

The lightning had set it on fire.

Sympathy for the danger and losses of others forced her own grief and anxiety into the background and, without pausing to think, she slipped on her shoes, snatched her shawl from the chest, and ran downstairs, shouting: "The lightning has struck! The convent is burning!"

Just at that moment the door of the chamber occupied by the two sisters opened, and Ernst Ortlieb, with tangled hair and pallid cheeks, came toward her.

Within the room the dim light of the little lamp and the fiery glare of the lightning illumined tear-stained, agitated faces.

After Heinz Schorlin had called to her, and Els had hurried to her aid, Eva, clad in her long, plain night robe, and barefooted, just as she had risen from her couch, followed the maid to her room. What must the knight, who but yesterday, she knew, had looked up to her as to a saint, think of her now?

She felt as if she were disgraced, stained with shame. Yet it was through no fault of her own, and overwhelmed by the terrible conviction that mysterious, supernatural powers, against which re-

sistance was hopeless, were playing a cruel game with her, she had felt as if the stormy sea were tossing her in a rudderless boat on its angry surges.

Unable to seek consolation in prayer, as usual, she had given herself up to dull despair, but only for a short time. Els had soon returned, and the firm, quiet manner with which her prudent, helpful friend and sister met her, and even tried to raise her drooping courage by a jest ere she sent her to their mother's sick room, had fallen on her soul like refreshing dew; not because Els promised to act for her—on the contrary, what she intended to do roused her to resistance.

She had been far too guilty and oppressed to oppose her, yet indignation concerning the sharp words which Els had uttered about the knight, and her intention of forbidding him the house, perhaps forever, had stimulated her like strong acid wine.

Not until after her sister had left her did she become capable of clearly understanding what she had felt during her period of somnambulism.

While her mother, thanks to a narcotic, slept soundly, breathing quietly, and in the entry below something, she knew not what, perhaps due to her father's return, was occurring, she sat thinking, pondering, while an impetuous throng of rebellious wishes raised their voices, alternately asking and denying, in her agitated breast.

How she had happened to rise from her couch

and go out had vanished utterly from her memory, but she was still perfectly conscious of her feelings during the night walk. If hitherto she had yearned to drain heavenly bliss from the chalice of faith, during her wanderings through the house she had longed for nothing save to drink her fill from the cup of earthly joy. Ardent kisses, of which she had forbidden herself even to think, she awaited with blissful delight. Her timorous heart, held in check by virgin modesty, accustomed to desire nothing save what she could have confessed to her sister and the abbess, seemed as if it had cast off every fetter and boldly resolved to risk the most daring deeds. The somnambulist had longed for the moment when, after Heinz Schorlin's confession that he loved her, she could throw her arms around his neck with rapturous gratitude.

If, while awake, she had desired only to speak to him of her saint and of his duty to overthrow the foes of the Church, she had wished while gazing at the moon from the stairs, and in front of the house door, to whisper sweet words of love, listen to his, and in so doing forget herself, the world, and everything which did not belong to him, to her, and their love.

And she remembered this longing and yearning in a way very unlike a mere dream. It seemed rather as if, while the moon was attracting her by its magic power, something, which had long slum-

bered in the depths of her soul, had waked to life; something, from which formerly, ere her heart and mind had been able rightly to understand it, she had shrunk with pious horror, had assumed a tangible form.

Now she dreaded this newly recognised sinful part of her own nature, which she had imagined a pure vessel that had room only for what was noble, sacred, and innocent.

She, too—she knew it now—was only a girl like those on whose desire for love she had looked down with arrogant contempt, no bride of heaven or saint.

She had not yet taken the veil, and it was fortunate, for what would have become of her had she not discovered until after her profession this part of her nature, which she thought every true nun, if she possessed it, must discard, like the hair which was shorn from her head, before taking the vow of the order.

During this self-inspection it became more and more evident that she was not one person, but two in one—a twofold nature with a single body and two distinct souls; and this conviction caused her as much pain as if the cut which had produced the separation were still bleeding.

Just at that moment her eyes fell upon the image of the Virgin opposite, and the usual impulse to lift her soul in prayer took possession of her even more powerfully than a short time before.

With fervent warmth she besought her to release her from this newly awakened nature, which surely could not be pleasing in the sight of Heaven, and let her once more become what she was before the unfortunate ramble in the moonlight.

But the composure she needed for prayer was soon destroyed, for the image of the knight rose before her again and again, and it seemed as if her own name, which he had called with such ardent longing, once more rang in her ears.

Whoever thus raises his voice in appeal to another loves that person. Heinz Schorlin's love was great and sincere and, instead of heeding the inner voice that warned her to return to prayer, she cried defiantly, "I will not!"

She could not yet part from the man for whom her heart throbbed with such passionate yearning, who was so brave and godly, so ardently devoted to her.

True, it had been peacefully beautiful to dream herself into the bright glory of heaven, yet the stormy rapture she had felt while thinking of him and his love seemed richer and greater. She could not, would not part from him.

Then she remembered her sister's intention of driving Heinz—Eva already called the knight by that name in her soliloquy—from her presence, and the thought that she might perhaps wound him so keenly that knightly honour would forbid his return alarmed and incensed her.



What right had Els to distrust him? A godly knight played no base game with the chosen lady of his heart, and that, yes, that she certainly was, since she had named her colour to him. Nothing should separate them. She needed him for her happiness as much as she did light and air. Hitherto she had longed for bliss in another world, but she was so young she probably had a long life before her, and what could existence on earth offer if robbed of the hope of his possession?

The newly awakened part of her nature demanded its rights. It would never again allow itself to be forced into the old slumber.

If her sister came back and boasted of having driven away the dangerous animal forever, she would show her that she had a different opinion of the knight, and would permit no one to interpose between them. But, while still pondering over this plan, the door of the sick-room was softly opened and her father beckoned to her to follow him.

Silently leading the way through the dusky corridor, no longer illumined by the moonlight, he entered his daughter's room before her. The lamp, still burning there, revealed the agitated face of her sister who, resting her chin on her hand, sat on the stool beside the spinning wheel.

Eva's courage, which had blazed up so brightly, instantly fell again.

"Good heavens! What has happened?" she

cried in terror; but her father answered in a hollow tone:

"For the sake of your noble sister, to whom I pledged my word, I will force myself to remain calm. But look at her! Her poor heart must be like a graveyard, for she was doomed to bury what she held dearest. And who," he continued furiously, so carried away by grief and indignation as to be unmindful of his promise to maintain his composure, "who is to blame for it all, save you and your boundless imprudence?"

Eva, with uplifted hands, tried to explain how, unconscious of her acts, she had walked in her sleep down the stairs and out of the house, but he imperiously cut her short with:

"Silence! I know all. My daughter gave a worthless tempter the right to expect the worst from her. You, whom we deemed the ornament of this house, whose purity hitherto was stainless, are to blame if people passing on the street point at it! Alas! alas! Our honour, our ancient, unsullied name!"

Groaning aloud, the father struck his brow with his clenched hand; but when Els rose and passed her arm around his shoulders to speak words of consolation, Eva, who hitherto had vainly struggled for words, could endure no more.

"Whoever says that of me, my father," she exclaimed with flashing eyes, scarcely able to control her voice, "has opened his ears to slander; and

whoever terms Heinz Schorlin a worthless tempter, is blinded by a delusion, and I call him to his face, even were it my own father, to whom I owe gratitude and respect——”

But here she stopped and extended her arms to keep off the deeply angered man, for he had started forward with quivering lips, and—she perceived it clearly—was already under the spell of one of the terrible fits of fury which might lead him to the most unprecedented deeds. Els, however, had clung to him and, while holding him back with all her strength, cried out in a tone of keen reproach, “Is this the way you keep your promise?”

Then, lowering her voice, she continued with loving entreaty: “My dear, dear father, can you doubt that she was asleep, unconscious of her acts, when she did what has brought so much misery upon us?”

And, interrupting herself, she added eagerly in a tone of the firmest conviction: “No, no, neither shame nor misery has yet touched you, my father, nor the poor child yonder. The suspicion of evil rests on me, and me alone, and if any one here must be wretched it is I.”

Then Herr Ernst, regaining his self-control, drew back from Eva, but the latter, as if fairly frantic, exclaimed: “Do you want to drive me out of my senses by your mysterious words and accusations? What, in the name of all the saints, has

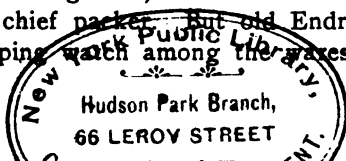
happened that can plunge my Els into misery and shame?"

"Into misery and shame," repeated her father in a hollow tone, throwing himself into a chair, where he sat motionless, with his face buried in his hands, while Els told her sister what had occurred when she went down into the entry to speak to the knight.

Eva listened to her story, fairly gasping for breath. For one brief moment she cherished the suspicion that Cordula had not acted from pure sympathy, but to impose upon Heinz Schorlin a debt of gratitude which would bind him to her more firmly. Yet when she heard that her father had given back his daughter's ring to Herr Casper Eysvogel and broken his child's betrothal she thought of nothing save her sister's grief and, sobbing aloud, threw herself into Els's arms.

The girls held each other in a close embrace until the first flash of lightning and peal of thunder interrupted the conversation.

The father and daughters had been so deeply agitated that they had not heard the storm rising outside, and the outbreak of the tempest surprised them. The peal of thunder, which so swiftly followed the lightning, also startled them and when, soon after, a second one shook the house with its crashing, rattling roar, Herr Ernst went out to wake the chief packer. But old Endres was already keeping watch among the wares entrusted



to him and when, after a brief absence, the master of the house returned, he found Eva again clasped in her sister's arms, and saw the latter kissing her brow and eyes as she tenderly strove to comfort her.

But Eva seemed deaf to her soothing words. Els, her faithful Els, was no longer the betrothed bride of her Wolff; her great, beautiful happiness was destroyed forever. On the morrow all Nuremberg would learn that Herr Casper had broken his son's betrothal pledge, because his bride, for the sake of a tempter, Sir Heinz Schorlin, had failed to keep her troth with him.

How deeply all this pierced Eva's heart! how terrible was the torture of the thought that she was the cause of this frightful misfortune! Dissolved in an agony of tears, she entreated the poor girl to forgive her; and Els did so willingly, and in a way that touched her father to the very depths of his heart. How good the girls must be who, spite of the sore suffering which one had brought upon the other, were still so loving and loyal!

Convinced that Eva, too, had done nothing worthy of punishment, he went towards them to clasp both in his arms; but ere he could do so the clap of thunder which had frightened Kätterle so terribly shook the whole room. "St. Clare, aid us!" cried Eva, crossing herself and falling upon her knees; but Els rushed to the window, opened it, and looked down the street. Nothing was visi-

ble there save a faint red glow on the distant northern horizon, and two mailed soldiers who were riding into the city at a rapid trot. They had been sent from the stables in the Marienthurm to keep order in case a fire should break out. Several men with hooks and poles followed, also hurrying to the Frauenthor.

In reply to the question where the fire was and where they going, they answered: "To the Fischbach, to help. Flames have burst out apparently under the fortress at the Thiergarten-thor."

The long-drawn call for help from the warder's horn, which came at the same moment, proved that the men were right.

Herr Ernst hastened out of the room just as Kätterle's shriek, "The lightning struck! the convent is burning!" rung from the upper step of the stairs.

He had already pronounced her sentence, and the sight of her roused his wrath again so vehemently that, spite of the urgent peril, he shouted to her that, whatever claimed his attention now, she certainly should not escape the most severe punishment for her shameful conduct.

Then he ordered old Endres and two of the menservants to watch the sleeping-room of his invalid wife, that in case anything should happen the helpless woman might be instantly borne to a place of safety.

Ere he himself went to the scene of the conflagration he hurried back to his daughters.

While the girls were giving him his hat and cloak he told them where the fire had broken out, and this caused another detention of the anxious master of the house, for Eva seized her shoes and stockings and, kicking her little slippers from her feet, declared that she, too, would not remain absent from the place when her dear nuns were in danger. But her father commanded her to stay with her mother and sister, and went to the door, turning back once more on the threshold to his daughters with the anxious entreaty: "Think of your mother!"

Another peal of thunder drowned the sound of his footsteps hurrying down the stairs. When Els, who had watched her father from the window a short time, went back to her sister, Eva dried her eyes and cheeks, saying: "Perhaps he is right; but whenever my heart urges me to obey any warm impulse, obstacles are put in my way. What a weak nonentity is the daughter of an honourable Nuremberg family!"

Els heard this complaint with astonishment. Was this her Eva, her "little saint," who yesterday had desired nothing more ardently than with humble obedience, far from the tumult of the world, to become worthy of her Heavenly Bridegroom, and in the quiet peace of the convent raise her soul to God? What had so changed the girl

in these few hours? Even the most worldly-minded of her friends would have taken such an impeachment ill.

But she had no time now to appeal to the conscience of her misguided sister. Love and duty summoned her to her mother's couch. And then! The child had become aware of her love, and was she, Els, who had been parted from Wolff by her own father, and yet did not mean to give him up, justified in advising her sister to cast aside her love and the hope of future happiness with and through the man to whom she had given her heart?

What miracles love wrought! If in a single night it had transformed the devout future Bride of Heaven into an ardently loving woman, it could accomplish the impossible for her also.

While Eva was gazing out of the window Els returned to her mother. She was still asleep and, without permitting either curiosity or longing to divert her from her duty, Els kept her place beside the couch of the beloved invalid, spite of the fire alarm which, though somewhat subdued, was heard in the room.



## CHAPTER XIII.

EVA was standing at the open window. The violence of the storm seemed exhausted. The clouds were rolling northward, and the thunder followed the flashes of lightning at longer and longer intervals. Peace was restored to the heavens, but the crowd and noise in the city and the street constantly increased.

The iron tongues of the alarm bells had never swung so violently, the warder's horn had never made the air quiver with such resonant appeals for aid.

Nor did the metallic voices above call for help in vain, for while a roseate glow tinged the linden in front of her window and the houses on the opposite side of the street with the hues of dawn, the crowds thronging from the Frauenthor to St. Klar-  
engasse grew denser and denser.

The convent was not visible from her chamber, but the acrid odor of the smoke and the loud voices which reached her ear from that direction proved that the fire was no trivial one. While she was seeking out the spot from which Heinz must

have looked up to her window, the Ortlieb men-servants, with some of the Montfort retainers, came out of the house with pails and ladders.

A female figure glided into the dark street after them. A black shawl concealed her head and the upper part of her figure, and she held a bundle in her hand.

It must be Kätterle.

Where was she going at this hour? As she was carrying the package, she could scarcely intend to help in putting out the fire. Was she stealing away from fear of punishment? Poor thing! Even the maid was hurled into misfortune through her guilt.

It pierced her very heart. But while she called to Kätterle to stop her, something else, which engrossed her still more, diverted her attention—the loud voice of Countess Cordula reached her from the street door. With whom was she talking? Did the girl, who ventured upon so many things which ill-beseemed a modest maiden, intend to join the men? Eva forgot that she, too, would have hurried to the nuns had not her father prevented it. The countess was already standing in the courtyard.

After Eva had given her a hasty glance she again looked for the maid, but Kätterle had already vanished in the darkness. This grieved her; she had neglected something which might have saved the girl, to whom she was warmly

attached, from some imprudent act. But while attracted by the strange appearance of the countess she had forgotten the other.

Cordula had probably just left her couch, for she wore only a plain dress tucked up very high, short boots, which she probably used in hunting, and a shawl crossed over her bosom; another was wound round her head in the fashion of the peasant women who brought their goods to market on cold winter days. No farmer's wife could be more simply clad, and yet—Eva was forced to admit it—there was something aristocratic in her firm bearing.

Her companions were her father's chaplain and the equerry who had grown grey in his service. Both were trying to dissuade her. The former pointed to a troop of women who were following the chief of police and some city constables, and said warningly: "Those are all wanton queans, whom the law of this city compels to lend their aid in putting out fires. How would it beseem your rank to join these who shame their sex—No, no! It would be said to-morrow that the ornament of the house of Montfort had——"

"That Countess Cordula had used her hands in extinguishing the fire," she interrupted with gay self-confidence. "Is there any disgrace in that? Must my noble birth debar me from being numbered among those who help their neighbours so far as lies in their power? If any good

is accomplished here, those poor women yonder will make it no worse by their aid. If people here believe that they do, it will give me double pleasure to ennoble it by working with them. Putting out the flames will not degrade me, and will make the women better. So, forward! See how the fire is blazing yonder! Help is needed there and, thank Heaven, I am no weakling. Besides, there are women who want assistance and, to women in peril, the most welcome aid is woman's."

The old equerry, his eyes glittering with tears, nodded assent, and led the way into the street; but the countess, instead of following instantly, glanced back for the page who was to carry the bandages which she had learned to use among her retainers at home. The agile boy did not delay her long; but while his mistress was looking to see that he had forgotten nothing of importance, he perceived at the window Eva, whose beauty had long since fired his young heart, and cast a languishing glance at her. Then Cordula also noticed her and called a pleasant greeting. Eva was on the point of answering in the same tone, when she remembered that Cordula had spoken of Heinz Schorlin in the presence of others as if he were awaiting her in all submission. Anger surged hotly in her breast, and she drew back into the room as if she had not heard the salutation.

The countess perceived it, and shrugged her shoulders pityingly.

Eva, dissatisfied with herself, continued to gaze down into the street long after the crowds of people flocking from the city had concealed Cordula from her eyes. It seemed as though she would never again succeed in anything that would bring contentment. Never had she felt so weak, so ill-tempered, so devoid of self-reliance. Yet she could not, as usual, seek consolation with her saint. There was so much here below to divert her attention.

The roseate glow on the linden had become a crimson glare, the flickering light on the opposite walls a dazzling illumination. The wind, now blowing from the west, bore from St. Klarengasse burning objects which scattered sparks around them—bundles of hay caught by the flames—from the convent barn to the Marienthurm opposite, and into the street. Besides, the noise above and behind, before and below her, grew louder and louder. The ringing of the bells and the blare of trumpets from the steeples continued, and with this constant ringing, pealing, and crashing from above, mingled the high, clear voices of the choir of nuns in the convent, beseeching in fervent litanies the help of their patron saint. True, the singing was often drowned by the noise from the street, for the fire marshals and quartermasters had been informed in time, and watchmen, soldiers

in the pay of the city, men from the hospital, and the abandoned women (required by law to help put out the fires) came in little groups, while bailiffs and servants of the Council, barbers (who were obliged to lend their aid, but whose surgical skill could find little employment here), members of the Council, priests and monks arrived singly. The street also echoed with the trampling of many steeds, for mounted troopers in coats of mail first dashed by to aid the bailiffs in maintaining order, then the inspector of water works, with his chief subordinate, trotted along to St. Klarengasse on the clumsy horses placed at their disposal by the Council in case of fire. He was followed by the millers, with brass fire engines. While their well-fed nags drew on sledges, with little noise, through the mire of the streets now softened by the rain, the heavy wooden water barrels needed in the work of extinguishing the flames, there was a loud rattling and clanking as the carts appeared on which the men from the Public Works building were bringing large and small ladders, hooks and levers, pails and torches, to the scene of the conflagration.

Besides those who were constrained by the law, many others desired to aid the popular Sisters of St. Clare and thereby earn a reward from God. A brewer had furnished his powerful stallions to convey to the scene of action, with their tools, the eight masons whose duty it was to use their skill

in extinguishing the flames. All sorts of people—men and women—followed, yelling and shrieking, to seek their own profit during the work of rescue. But the bailiffs kept a sharp eye on them, and made way when the commander of the German knights, with several companions on whose black mantles the white cross gleamed, appeared on horseback, and at last old Herr Berthold Vorchtel trotted up on his noble grey, which was known to the whole city. He still had a firm seat in the saddle, but his head was bowed, and whoever knew that only one hour before the corpse of his oldest son, slain in a duel, had been brought home, admired the aged magistrate's strength of will. As First Losunger and commander in chief he was the head of the Council, and therefore of the city also. Duty had commanded him to mount his steed, but how pale and haggard was his shrewd face, usually so animated!

Just in front of the Ortlieb mansion the commander of the German knights rode to his side, and Eva saw how warmly he shook him by the hand, as if he desired to show the old man very cordially his deep sympathy in some sore trouble which had assailed him.

Ever since Wolff's betrothal to Els had been announced the Vorchtels had ceased to be on terms of intimacy with the Ortliebs; but old Herr Berthold, though he himself had probably regarded young Eysvogel as his "Ursel's" future husband,

had always treated Eva kindly, and she was not mistaken—tears were glittering on his cheeks in the torchlight. The sight touched the young girl's inmost heart. How eagerly she desired to know what had befallen the Vorchtels, and to give the old man some token of sympathy! What could have caused him so much sorrow? Only a few hours before her father had returned from a gay entertainment at his house. It could scarcely concern Herr Berthold's wife, his daughter Ursula, or either of his two vigorous sons. Perhaps death had only bereft him of some more distant, though beloved relative, yet surely she would have known that, for the Ortliebs were connected by marriage both with the old gentleman and his wife.

Tortured by a presentiment of evil, Eva gazed after him, and also watched for Heinz Schorlin among the people in the street. Must not anxiety for her bring him hither, if he learned how near her house the fire was burning?

Whenever a helmet or knight's *baret* appeared above the crowd she thought that he was coming. Once she believed that she had certainly recognised him, for a tall young man of knightly bearing appeared, not mounted, but on foot, and stopped opposite to the Ortlieb house. That must be he! But when he looked up to her window, the reflection of the fire showed that the man who had made her heart beat so quickly was indeed a young and handsome knight, but by no means



the person for whom she had mistaken him. It was Boemund Altrosen, famed as victor in many a tournament, who when a boy had often been at the house of her uncle, Herr Pfinzing. There was no mistaking his coal-black, waving locks. It was said that the dark-blue sleeve of a woman's robe which he wore on his helmet in the jousts belonged to the Countess von Montfort. She was his lady, for whom he had won so many victories.

Heinz Schorlin had mentioned him at the ball as his friend, and told her that the gallant knight would vainly strive to win the reckless countess. Perhaps he was now looking at the house so intently on Cordula's account. Or had Heinz, his friend, sent him to watch over her while he was possibly detained by the Emperor?

But, no; he had just gone nearer to the house to question a man in the von Montfort livery, and the reply now led him to move on towards the convent.

Were the tears which filled Eva's eyes caused by the smoke that poured from the fire more and more densely into the street, or to disappointment and bitter anguish?

The danger which threatened her aunt and her beloved nuns also increased her excitement. True, the sisters themselves seemed to feel safe, for snatches of their singing were still audible amid the ringing of the bells and the blare of the trumpets, but the fire must have been very hard

to extinguish. This was proved by the bright glow on the linden tree and the shouts of command which, though unintelligible, rose above every other sound.

The street below was becoming less crowded. Most of those who had left their beds to render aid had already reached the scene of the conflagration. Only a few stragglers still passed through the open gate towards the Marienthurm. Among them were horsemen, and Eva's heart again throbbed more quickly, but only for a short time. Heinz Schorlin was far taller than the man who had again deceived her, and his way would hardly have been lighted by two mounted torch bearers. Soon her rosy lips even parted in a smile, for the sturdy little man on the big, strong-boned Vinzgau steed, whom she now saw distinctly, was her dearest relative, her godfather, the kind, shrewd, imperial magistrate, Berthold Pfinzing, the husband of her father's sister, good Aunt Christine.

If he looked up he would tell her about old Herr Vorchtel. Nor did he ride past his darling's house without a glance at her window, and when he saw Eva beckon he ordered the servants to keep back, and stopped behind the chains.

After he had briefly greeted his niece and she had enquired what had befallen the Vorchtels, he asked anxiously: "Then you know nothing yet? And Els—has it been kept from her, too?"

"What, in the name of all the saints?" asked Eva, with increasing alarm.

- Then Herr Pfinzing, who saw that the door of the house was open, asked her to come down. Eva was soon standing beside her godfather's big bay, and while patting the smooth neck of the splendid animal he said hurriedly, in a low tone: "It's fortunate that it happened so. You can break it gradually to your sister, child. To-night—— Summon up your courage, for there are things which even a man—— To make the story short, then: To-night Wolff Eysvogel and young Vorchtel quarrelled, or rather Ulrich irritated your Wolff so cruelly that he drew his sword——"

"Wolff!" shrieked Eva, whose hand had already dropped from the horse. "Wolff! He is so terribly strong, and if he drew his sword in anger——"

"He dealt his foe one powerful thrust," replied the imperial magistrate with an expressive gesture. "The sword pierced him through. But I must go on—— Only this one thing more: Ulrich was borne back to his parents as a corpse. And Wolff—— Where is he hiding? May the saints long be the only ones who know! A quarrel with such a result under the Emperor's eyes, now when peace has just been declared throughout the land! Who knows what sentence will be pronounced if the bailiffs show themselves shrewder this time than usual! My office compelled me to set the

pack upon him. That is the reason I am so late. Tell Els as cautiously as possible."

He bowed gallantly and trotted on, but Eva, as if hunted by enemies, rushed up the staircase, threw herself on her knees before the priedieu, and sobbed aloud.

Young Vorchtel had undoubtedly heard of the events in the entry, taunted Wolff with his betrothed bride's nocturnal interview with a knight, and thus roused the strong man to fury. How terrible it all was! How could she bear it! Her thoughtlessness had cost a human life, robbed parents of their son! Through her fault her sister's betrothed husband, whom she also loved, was in danger of being placed under ban, perhaps even of being led to the executioner's block!

She had no thought of any other motive which might have induced the hot-blooded young men to cross swords and, firmly convinced that her luckless letter had drawn Heinz Schorlin to the house and thus led to all these terrible things, she vainly struggled for composure.

Sometimes she beheld in imagination the despairing Els; sometimes the aged Vorchtels, grieving themselves to death; sometimes Wolff, outlawed, hiding like a hunted deer in the recesses of the forest; sometimes the maid, fleeing with her little bundle into the darkness of the night; sometimes the burning convent; and at intervals also Heinz Schorlin, as he knelt before her and

raised his clasped hands with passionate entreaty.

But she repelled every thought of him as a sin, and even repressed the impulse to look out into the street to seek him. Her sole duty now was to pray to her patron saint and the Mother of God in behalf of her sister, whom she had hurled into misfortune, and her poor heart bleeding from such deep wounds; but the consolation which usually followed the mere uplifting of her soul in prayer did not come, and it could not be otherwise, for amid her continual looking into her own heart and listening to what went on around her no real devotion was possible.

Although she constantly made fresh efforts to collect her thoughts, and continued to kneel with clasped hands before the priedieu, not a hoof-beat, not a single loud voice, escaped her ear. Even the alternate deepening and paling of the reflection of the fire, which streamed through the window, attracted her attention, and the ringing of bells and braying of trumpets, which still continued, maintained the agitation in her soul.

Yet prayer was the sole atonement she could make for the wrong she had done her sister; so she did not cease her endeavours to plead for her to the Great Helper above, but her efforts were futile. Yet even when she heard voices close by the house, among which she distinguished Countess Cordula's and—if she was not mistaken—her

father's, she resisted the impulse to rise from her knees.

At last the vain struggle was ended by an interruption from without. After unusually loud voices exclaiming and questioning had reached her from the entry, the door of her chamber suddenly opened and old Martsche looked in. The house-keeper was seeking something; but when she found the devout child on her knees she did not wish to disturb her, and contented herself with the evidence of her eyes. But Eva stopped her, and learned that she was searching for Kätterle, who could neither be found in her room, or anywhere else. Herr Ortlieb had brought Countess von Montfort home severely burned, and there were all sorts of things for the maid to do.

Eva clung shuddering to the back of the prie-dieu, for the certainty that the unfortunate girl had really fled was like strewing salt on her wounds.

When Martsche left her and Els entered, her excitement had risen to such a pitch that she flung herself before her, as if frantic and, clinging to her knees, heaping self-accusations upon herself with passionate impetuosity, she pleaded, amid her sobs, for pardon and mercy.

Meanwhile Els had been informed by her father of her lover's fatal deed, and as soon as she perceived what tortured her sister she relieved her, with loving words of explanation, from the re-

proach of being the cause of this misfortune also, for the quarrel had taken place so early that no tidings of the meeting in the entry could have reached young Vorchtel when he became involved in the fray with Wolff.

Nor was it solely to soothe Eva that she assured her that, deeply as she mourned the death of the hapless Ulrich and his parents' grief, Wolff's deed could not diminish either her love or her hope of becoming his.

Eva listened to this statement with sparkling eyes. The love in her sister's heart was as immovably firm as the ancient stones of her native stronghold, which defied every storm, and on which even the destroying, kindling lightning could inflict no injury. This made her doubly dear, and from the depths of dull despair her soul, ever prone to soar upwards, rose swiftly to the heights of hopeful exaltation.

When Els at last entreated her to go to rest without her, she willingly consented, for her mother was comfortable, and Sister Renata was watching at her bedside.

Eva kept her promise, after Els, who wanted to see the Countess von Montfort, had satisfied her concerning the welfare of the nuns and promised to go to rest herself as soon as possible.

The stopping of the alarm bells proved that the fire was under control. Even its reflection had disappeared, but the eastern sky was begin-

ning to be suffused with a faint tinge of rose colour.

When her sister left her Eva herself drew the curtains before the window, and sleep soon ended her thoughts and yearnings, her grief and her hope.



## CHAPTER XIV.

COUNTESS Cordula von Montfort's room faced the east and looked out into the garden. The sun of the June morning had just risen, filling it with cheerful light.

The invalid's maid had wished to deny Els admittance, but the countess called eagerly to her, and then ordered the windows to be opened, because she never felt comfortable unless it was light around her and she could breathe God's pure air.

The morning breeze bore the smoke which still rose from the fire in another direction, and thus a refreshing air really entered the room from the garden, for the thunderstorm had refreshed all nature, and flower beds and grass, bush and tree, exhaled a fresh odour of earth and leafage which it was a delight to breathe.

The leech Otto, to whom the severely wounded Ulrich Vorchtel had been carried, had just left the countess. The burns on her hands and arms had been bandaged—nay, the old gentleman had cut out the scorched portions of her tresses with his own hand. Cordula's energetic action had made

the famous surgeon deem her worthy of such care. He had also advised her to seek the nursing of the oldest daughter of her host, whose invalid wife he was attending, and she had gladly assented ; for Els had attracted her from their first meeting, and she was accustomed to begin the day at sunrise.

“How does it happen that you neither weep nor even hang your head after all the sorrow which last night brought you ?” asked Cordula, as the Nuremberg maiden sat down beside her bed. “You are a stranger to the Swiss knight, and when we surprised you with him you had not come to a meeting—I know that full well. But if so true and warm a love unites you to young Eysvogel, how does it happen that your joyous courage is so little damped by his father’s denial and his own unhappy deed, which at this time could scarcely escape punishment ? You do not seem frivolous, and yet——”

“Yet,” replied Els with a pleasant smile, “many things have made a deeper impression. We are not all alike, Countess, yet there is much in your nature which must render it easy for you to understand me ; for, Countess——”

“Call me Cordula,” interrupted the girl in a tone of friendly entreaty. “Why should I deny that I am fond of you ? and at the risk of making you vain, I will betray——”

“Well ?” asked Els eagerly.

“That the splendid old leech described you to

me exactly as I had imagined you," was the reply. "You were one of those, he said, whose mere presence beside a sick-bed was as good as medicine, and so you are; and, dear Jungfrau Els, this salutary medicine benefits me."

"If I am to dispense with the 'Countess,'" replied the other, "you must spare me the 'Jungfrau.' Nursing you will give me all the more pleasure on account of the warm gratitude——"

"Never mind that," interrupted Cordula. "But please look at the bandage, beneath which the flesh burns and aches more than is necessary, and then go on with your explanation."

Els examined the countess's arm, and then applied a household remedy whose use she had learned from the wife of Herr Pfinzing, her Aunt Christine, who was familiar with the healing art. It relieved the pain, and when Cordula told her so, Els went on with her explanation. "When all these blows fell upon me, they at first seemed, indeed, unprecedented and scarcely possible to endure. When afterwards my Wolff's unhappy deed was added, I felt as though I were standing in a dense, dark mist, where each step forwards must lead me into a stifling morass or over a precipice. Then I began to reflect upon what had happened, as is my custom; I separated, in my thoughts, the evil menacing in the future from the good, and had scarcely made a little progress in this way when morass and abyss lost their terrors; both, I

found, could be left to take care of themselves; since neither Wolff nor I lack love and good will, and we possess some degree of prudence and caution."

"Yes, this thinking and considering!" cried the countess, with a faint sigh. "It succeeds in my case, too, only, unluckily, I usually don't begin until it is too late and the folly has been committed."

"Then, henceforth, you must reverse the process," answered Els cheerily. But directly after she changed her tone, which sounded serious enough as she added: "The sorrow of the poor Vorchtels and the grief my betrothed husband must endure, because the dead man was once a dear friend, certainly casts a dark shadow upon many things; but you, who love the chase, must surely be familiar with the misty autumn mornings to which I allude. Everything, far and near, is covered by a thick veil, yet one feels that there is bright sunshine behind it. Suddenly the mist scatters——"

"And mountain and forest, land and water, lie before us in the radiant sunlight!" cried the countess. "How well I know such scenes! And how I should rejoice if a favourable wind would sweep the grey mist away for you right speedily! Only—indeed, I am not disposed to look on the dark side—only, perhaps you do not know how resolute the Emperor is that the peace of the country shall

be maintained. If your lover allowed himself to be carried away——”

“This was not the first time,” Els eagerly interrupted, “that young Vorchtel tried to anger him in the presence of others; and he believed that he was justified in bearing a grudge against his former friend—it was considered a settled thing that Wolff and his sister Ursula were to marry.”

“Until,” Cordula broke in, “he gazed into your bright eyes.”

“How could you know that?” asked Els in confusion.

“Because, in love and hate, as well as in reckoning, two and three follow one,” laughed the countess. “As for your Wolff, in particular, I will gladly believe, with you, that he can succeed in clearing himself before the judges. But with regard to old Eysvogel, who looks as though, if he met our dear Lord Himself, he would think first which of the two was the richer, your future brother-in-law Siebenburg, that disagreeable ‘Mustache,’ and his poor wife, who sits at home grieving over her dissolute husband—what gratitude you can expect from such kindred——”

“None,” replied Els sadly. Yet a mischievous smile hovered around her lips as, bending over the invalid, she added in a whisper: “But the good I expect from all the evil is, that we and the Eysvogels will be separated as if by wall and moat. They will never cross them, but Wolff would find

the way back to me, though we were parted by an ocean, and mountains towering to the sky divided us."

"This confidence, indeed, maintains the courage," said the countess, and with a faint sigh she added: "Whatever evil may befall you, many might envy you."

"Then love has conquered you also?" Els began; but Cordula answered evasively:

"Let that pass, dear Jungfrau. Perhaps love treats me as a mother deals with a froward child, because I asked too much of her. My life has become an endless battue. Much game of all kinds is thus driven out to be shot, but the sportsman finds true pleasure only in tracking the single heathcock, the solitary chamois. Yet, no," and in her eagerness she flung her bandaged hand so high into the air that she groaned with pain and was forced to keep silence. When able to speak once more, still tortured by severe suffering, she exclaimed angrily: "No, I want neither driving nor stalking. What do I care for the prey? I am a woman, too. I would fain be the poor persecuted game, which the hunter pursues at the risk of breaking his bones and neck. It must be delightful; one would willingly bear the pain of a wound for its sake. I don't mean these pitiful burns, but a deep and deadly one."

"You ought to have spared yourself these," said Els in a tone of affectionate warning. "Con-

sider what you are to your father, and how your suffering pains him! To risk a precious human life for the sake of a stupid brute——”

“They call it a sin, I know,” Cordula burst forth. “And yet I would commit the same to-morrow at the risk of again—— Oh, you cautious city people, you maidens with snow-white hands! What do you know of a girl like me? You cannot even imagine what my child life was; and yet it is told in a single word—motherless! I was never permitted to see her, to hear her dear, warning voice. She paid with her own life for giving me mine. My father? How kind he is! He meant to supply his dead wife’s place by anticipating my every wish. Had I desired to feast my eyes on the castle in flames, it would, perhaps, now lie in ashes. So I became what I am. True—and this is something—I grew to be at least *one* person’s joy—his. No, no, at home there are others also, though they dwell in wretched hovels, who would gladly welcome me back. But except these, who will ask about the reckless countess? I myself do not care to linger long when the mirror shows me my image. Do you wish to know what this has to do with the fire? Much; for otherwise I should scarcely have been wounded. The lightning had struck only the convent barn; the cow stable, when we arrived, was still safe, but the flames soon reached it also. Neither the nuns nor the men had thought of driving the cattle out. Poor city cattle! In the

country the animals have more friendly care. When the work of rescue was at last commenced the cows naturally refused to leave their old home. Some prudent person had torn the door off the hinges that they might not stifle. Just in front of it stood a pretty red cow with a white star on her face. A calf was by her side, and the mother had already sunk on her knees and was licking it in mortal terror. I pitied the poor thing, and as Boemond Altrosen, the black-haired knight who entered your house with the rest after the ride to Kadolzburg, had just come there, I told him to save the calf. Of course he obeyed my wish, and as it struggled he dragged it out of the stable with his strong arms. The building was already blazing, and the thatched roof threatened to fall in. Just at that moment the old cow looked at me so piteously and uttered such a mournful bellow that it touched me to the heart. My eyes rested on the calf, and a voice within whispered that it would be motherless, like me, and miss during the first part of its life God's best gift. But since, as you have heard, I act before I think, I went myself—I no longer know how—into the burning stable. It was hard to breathe in the dense smoke, and fiery sparks scorched my shawl and my hair, but I was conscious of one thought: You must save the helpless little creature's mother! So I called and lured her, as I do at home, where all the cows are fond of me, but it was useless; and just as I perceived this the



thatched roof fell in, and I should probably have perished had not Altrosen this time carried my own by no means light figure out of the stable instead of the calf."

"And you?" asked Els eagerly.

"I submitted," replied the countess.

"No, no," urged Els. "Your heart throbbed faster with grateful joy, for you saw the desire of your soul fulfilled. A hunter, and one of the noblest of them all, risked his life in the pursuit of your love. O Countess Cordula, I remember that knight well, and if the dark-blue sleeve which he wore on his helm in the tournament was yours——"

"I believe it was," Cordula interrupted indifferently. "But, what was of more importance, when I opened my eyes again the cow was standing outside, licking her recovered calf."

"And the knight?" asked Els. "Whoever so heroically risks his life for his lady's wish should be sure of her gratitude."

"Boemund can rely on that," said Cordula positively. "At least, what he did this time for my sake weighs more heavily in the scale than the lances he has broken, his love songs, or the mute language of his longing eyes. Those are shafts which do not pierce my heart. How reproachfully you look at me! Let him take lessons from his friend Heinz Schorlin, and he may improve. Yes, the Swiss knight! He would be the man for me, spite of your involuntary meeting with him and your de-

vout sister, for whom he forgot every one else, and me also, in the dancing hall. O Jungfrau Els, I have the hunter's eyes, which are keen-sighted! For his sake your beautiful Eva, with her saintly gaze, might easily forget to pray. It was not you, but she, who drew him to-night to your house. Had this thought entered my head downstairs in the entry I should probably, to be honest, have omitted my little fairy tale and let matters take their course. St. Clare ought to have protected her future votary. Besides, it pleases the arrogant little lady to show me as plainly as possible, on every occasion, that I am a horror to her. Let those who will accept such insults. My Christianity does not go far enough to offer her the right cheek too. And shall I tell you something? To spoil her game, I should be capable, in spite of all the life preservers in the world, of binding Schorlin to me in good earnest."

"Do not!" pleaded Els, raising her clasped hands beseechingly, and added, as if in explanation: "For the noble Boemund Altrosen's sake, do not."

"To promise that, my darling, is beyond my power," replied Cordula coolly, "because I myself do not know what I may do or leave undone to-morrow or the day after. I am like a beech leaf on the stream. Let us see where the current will carry it. It is certain," and she looked at her bandaged hands, "that my greatest beauty, my round arms, are disfigured. Scars adorn a man; on a

woman they are ugly and repulsive. At a dance they can be hidden under tight sleeves, but how hot that would be in the *Schwäbeln* and *Rai*! So I had better keep away from these foolish gaieties in future. A calf turns a countess out of a ballroom! What do you think of that? New things often happen."

Here she was interrupted; the housekeeper called Els. Sir Seitz Siebenburg, spite of the untimely hour, had come to speak to her about an important matter. Her father had gone to rest and sleep. The knight also enquired sympathisingly about Countess von Montfort and presented his respects.

"Of which I can make no use!" cried Cordula angrily. "Tell him so, Martsche."

As the housekeeper withdrew she exclaimed impatiently: "How it burns! The heat would be enough to convert the rescued calf into an appetising roast. I wish I could sleep off the pain of my foolish prank! The sunlight is beginning to be troublesome. I cannot bear it; it is blinding. Draw the curtain over the window."

Cordula's own maid hastened to obey the order. Els helped the countess turn on her pillows, and as in doing so she touched her arm, the sufferer cried angrily: "Who cares what hurts me? Not even you!"

Here she paused. The pleading glance which Els had cast at her must have pierced her soft

heart, for her bosom suddenly heaved violently and, struggling to repress her sobs, she gasped: "I know you mean kindly, but I am not made of stone or iron either. I want to be alone and go to sleep."

She closed her eyes as she spoke and, when Els bent to kiss her, tears bedewed her cheeks.

Soon after Els went down into the entry to meet her lover's brother-in-law. He had refused to enter the empty sitting-room. The Countess von Montfort's unfriendly dismissal had vexed him sorely, yet it made no lasting impression. Other events had forced into the background the bitter attack of Cordula, for whom he had never felt any genuine regard.

The experiences of the last few hours had converted the carefully bedizened gallant into a coarse fellow, whose outward appearance bore visible tokens of his mental depravity. The faultlessly cut garment was pushed awry on his powerful limbs and soiled on the breast with wine stains. The closely fitting steel chain armour, in which he had ridden out, now hung in large folds upon his powerful frame. The long mustache, which usually curled so arrogantly upwards, now drooped damp and limp over his mouth and chin, and his long reddish hair fell in dishevelled locks around his bloated face. His blue eyes, which usually sparkled so brightly, now looked dull and bleared, and there were white spots on his copper-coloured cheeks.

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Since Countess Cordula gave him the insulting message to his wife he had undergone more than he usually experienced in the course of years.

"An accursed night!" he had exclaimed, in reply to the housekeeper's question concerning the cause of his disordered appearance.

Els, too, was startled by his looks and the hoarse sound of his voice. Nay, she even drew back from him, for his wandering glance made her fear that he was intoxicated.

Only a short time before, it is true, he had scarcely been able to stand erect, but the terrible news which had assailed him had quickly sobered him.

He had come at this unwontedly early hour to enquire whether the Ortliebs had heard anything of his brother-in-law Wolff. There was not a word of allusion to the broken betrothal.

In return for the promise that she would let the Eysvogels know as soon as she received any tidings of her lover, which Els gave unasked, Siebenburg, who had always treated her repellently or indifferently, thanked her so humbly that she was surprised. She did not know how to interpret it; nay, she anticipated nothing good when, with urgent cordiality, he entreated her to forget the unpleasant events of the preceding night, which she must attribute to a sudden fit of anger on Herr Casper's part. She was far too dear to all the members of the family for them to give her up so

easily. What had occurred—she must admit that herself—might have induced even her best friend to misunderstand it. For one brief moment he, too, had been tempted to doubt her innocence. If she knew old Eysvogel's terrible situation she would certainly do everything in her power to persuade her father to receive him that morning, or—which would be still better—go to his office. The weal and woe of many persons were at stake, her own above all, since, as Wolff's betrothed bride, she belonged to him inseparably.

“Even without the ring?” interrupted Els bitterly; and when Siebenburg eagerly lamented that he had not brought it back, she answered proudly: “Don't trouble yourself, Sir Seitz! I need this sacred pledge as little as the man who still wears *mine*. Tell your kinsfolk so. I will inform my father of Herr Casper's wish; he is asleep now. Shall I guess aright in believing that the other disasters which have overtaken you are connected with the waggon trains Wolff so anxiously expected?”

Siebenburg, twirling his cap in confusion, assented to her question, adding that he knew nothing except that they were lost and, after repeating his entreaty that she would accomplish a meeting between the two old gentlemen, left her.

It would indeed have been painful for him to talk with Els, for a messenger had brought tidings that the waggons had been attacked and robbed,

and the perpetrators of the deed were his own brothers and their cousin and accomplice Absbach.

True, Seitz himself had had no share in the assault, yet he did not feel wholly blameless for what had occurred, since over the wine and cards he had boasted, in the presence of the robbers, of the costly wares which his father-in-law was expecting, and mentioned the road they would take.

Seitz Siebenburg's conscience was also burdened with something quite different.

Vexed and irritated by the countess's insulting rebuff, he had gone to the Green Shield to forget his annoyance at the gaming table in the Duke of Pomerania's quarters. He had fared ill. There was no lack of fiery Rhine wine supplied by the generous host; the sultry atmosphere caused by the rising thunderstorm increased his thirst and, half intoxicated, and incensed by the luck of Heinz Schorlin, in whom he saw the preferred lover of the lady who had so suddenly withdrawn her favour, he had been led on to stakes of unprecedented amount. At last he risked the lands, castle, and village which he possessed in Hersbruck as his wife's dower. Moreover, he was aware of having said things which, though he could not recall them to memory in detail, had roused the indignation of many of those who were present. The remarks referred principally to the Ortlieb sisters.

Amid the wild uproar prevailing around the gaming table that night the duel which had cost

young Vorchtel his life was not mentioned until the last dice had been thrown. In the discussion the victor's betrothed bride had been named, and Siebenburg clearly remembered that he had spoken of the breaking of his brother-in-law's engagement, and connected it with accusations which involved him in a quarrel with several of the guests, among them Heinz Schorlin.

Similar occurrences were frequent, and he was brave, strong, and skilful enough to cope with any one, even the dreaded Swiss; only he was vexed and troubled because he had disputed with the man to whom he had lost his property. Besides, his father-in-law had so earnestly enjoined it upon him to put no obstacle in the way of his desire to make peace with the Ortliebs that he was obliged to bow his stiff neck to them.

The arrogant knight's position was critical, and real inward dignity was unknown to him. Yet he would rather have been dragged with his brothers to the executioner's block than humbled himself before the Swiss. But he must talk with him for the sake of his twin sons, whose heritage he had so shamefully gambled away. True, the utmost he intended was the confession that, while intoxicated, he had staked his property at the gaming table and said things which he regretted. Heinz Schorlin's generosity was well known. Perhaps he might offer some acceptable arrangement ere the notary conveyed his estate to him. He did not

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yet feel that he could stoop so low as to receive a gift from this young upstart.

If his father-in-law, who supported him, was really ruined, as he had just asserted, he would indeed be plunged into beggary, with his wife, whose stately figure constantly rose before him, with a look of mute reproach, his beautiful twin boys, and his load of debt.

The gigantic man felt physically crushed by the terrible blows of fate which had fallen upon him during this last wakeful night. He would fain have gone to the nearest tavern and there left it to the wine to bring forgetfulness. To drink, drink constantly, and in the intervals sleep with his head resting on his arms, seemed the most tempting prospect. But he was obliged to return to the Eysvogels. There was too much at stake. Besides, he longed to see the twins who resembled him so closely, and of whom Countess Cordula had said that she hoped they would not be like their father.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE city gates were already open. Peasants and peasant women bringing vegetables and other farm produce to market thronged the streets, wains loaded with grain or charcoal rumbled along, and herds of cattle and swine, laden donkeys, the little carts of the farmers and bee keepers conveying milk and honey to the city, passed over the dyke, which was still softened by the rain of the preceding night.

The thunderstorm had cooled the air, but the rays of the morning sun were already scorching. A few heavy little clouds were darkly relieved against the blue sky, and a peasant, driving two sucking pigs before him, called to another, who was carrying a goose under each arm, that the sun was drawing water, and thundershowers seldom came singly.

Yet the city looked pleasant enough in the freshness of early June. The maidservants who were opening the shutters glanced gaily out into the streets, and arranged the flowers in front of

the windows or bowed reverently as a priest passed by on his way to mass. The barefooted Capuchin, with his long beard, beckoned to the cook or the tradesman's wife and, as she put something into his beggar's sack and he thanked her kindly with some pious axiom, she felt as if she herself and all her household had gained a right to the blessing of Heaven for that day, and cheerily continued her work.

The brass counter in the low, broad bow window of the baker's house glittered brightly, and the pale apprentice wiped the flour from his face and gave his master's rosy-cheeked daughter fresh warm cakes to set on the shining shelves. The barber's nimble apprentice hung the towel and basin at the door, while his master, wearied by the wine-bibbing and talk at the tavern or his labour at the fire, was still asleep. His active wife had risen before him, strewed the shop with fresh sand, and renewed the goldfinch's food.

The workshops and stores were adorned with birch branches, and the young daughters of the burghers, in becoming caps, the maid servants and apprentices, who were going to market with baskets on their arms, wore a flower or something green on their breasts or in their caps.

The first notes of the bells, pealing solemnly, were summoning worshippers to mass, the birds were singing in the garden, and the cocks were crowing in the yards of the houses. The animals

passing in the street lowed, grunted, and cackled merrily in the dawn of the young day.

Gay young men, travelling students who had sought cheap quarters in the country, now entered the city with a merry song on their lips just shaded by the first dawn of manhood, and when a maiden met them she lowered her eyes modestly before the riotous fellows.

The terrors of the frightful thunderstorm seemed forgotten. Nuremberg looked gladsome; a carpet hung from many a bow-window, and flags and streamers fluttered from roofs and balconies to honour the distinguished guests. Many signs of their presence were visible, squires and equerries, in their masters' colours, were riding spirited horses, and a few knights who loved early rising were already in the saddle, their shining helmets and coats of mail flashing brightly in the sunshine.

The gigantic figure of Sir Seitz Siebenburg moved with drooping head through the budding joy of this June day towards the Eysvogel dwelling.

His gloomy, haggard face and disordered attire made two neatly dressed young shoemaker's apprentices, on their way to their work, nudge each other and look keenly at him.

"I'd rather meet him here in broad daylight among houses and people than in the dusk on the highway," remarked one of them.

"There's no danger," replied the other. "He

wears the curb now. He moved from the robber nest into the rich Eysvogel house opposite. That's Herr Casper's son-in-law. But such people can never let other folks' property alone. Only here they work in another way. The shoes he wears were made in our workshop, but the master still whistles for his pay, and he owes everybody—the tailor, the lacemaker, the armourer, the girdle-maker, and the goldsmith. If an apprentice reminds him of the debt, let him beware of bruises."

"The Emperor Rudolph ought to issue an edict against such injustice!" wrathfully exclaimed the other and taller youth, the handsome son of a master of the craft from Weissenburg on the Sand, who expected soon to take his father's place. "Up at Castle Graufels, which is saddled on our little town, master and man would be going barefoot but for us; yet for three years we haven't seen so much as a penny of his, though my father says times have already improved, since the Hapsburg, as a just man——"

"Things have not been so bad here for a long while, the saints be praised!" his companion broke in. "Siebenburg, or some of his wife's rich kindred, will at last be compelled to settle matters. We have the law and the Honourable Council to attend to that. Look up! Yonder stately old house gave its daughter to the penniless knight. She is one of our customers too; a handsome woman, and not one of the worst either. But her

mother, who was born a countess—if the shoe doesn't make a foot small which Nature created big, there's such an outcry! True, the old woman, her mother, is worse still; she scolds and screams. But look up at the bow window. There she stands. I'm only a poor brewer's son, but before I——”

“You don't say so!” the other interrupted. “Have you seen the owl in the cage in front of the guardhouse at the gate of the hospital? It is her living image; and how her chin projects and moves up and down, as though she were chewing leather!”

“And yet,” said the other, as if insisting upon something difficult to believe, “and yet the old woman is a real countess.”

The Weissenburg apprentice expressed his astonishment with another: “You don't say so!” but as he spoke he grasped his companion's arm, adding earnestly: “Let us go. That ugly old woman just looked at me, and if it wasn't the evil eye—— I shall go straight to the church and drive away the misfortune with holy water.”

“Come, then,” answered the Nuremberg youth, but continued thoughtfully: “Yet my master's grandmother, a woman of eighty, is probably older than the one up there, but nobody could imagine a kinder, pleasanter dame. When she looks approvingly at one it seems as if the dear God's blessing were shining from two little windows.”

"That's just like my grandmother at home!" exclaimed the Weissenburg apprentice with sparkling eyes.

Turning from the Eysvogel mansion as they spoke, they pursued their way.

Siebenburg had overtaken the apprentices, but ere crossing the threshold of the house which was now his home he stopped before it.

It might, perhaps, be called the largest and handsomest in Nuremberg; but it was only a wide two-story structure, though the roof had been adorned with battlements and the sides with a small bow-windowed turret. At the second story a bracket, bearing an image of the Madonna, had been built out on one side, and on the other the bow window from which old Countess Rotterbach had looked down into the street.

The coat of arms was very striking and wholly out of harmony with the simplicity of the rest of the building. Its showy splendour, visible for a long distance, occupied the wide space between the door of the house and the windows of the upper story. The escutcheon of the noble family from which Rosalinde, Herr Casper's wife, had descended rested against the shield bearing the birds. The Rotterbach supporters, a nude man and a bear standing on its hind legs, rose on both sides of the double escutcheon, and the stone cutter had surmounted the Eysvogel helmet with a count's coronet.

This elaborate decoration of the ancient patrician house had become one of the sights of the city, and had often made Herr Casper, at the Honourable Council and elsewhere, clench his fist under his mantle, for it had drawn open censure and bitter mockery upon the arrogant man, but his desire to have it replaced by a more modest one had been baffled by the opposition of the women of his family. They had had it put up, and would not permit any one to touch it, though Wolff, after his return from Italy, had strenuously urged its removal.

It had brought the Eysvogels no good fortune, for on the day of its completion the business received its first serious blow, and it also served to injure the commercial house externally in a very obvious manner. Whereas formerly many wares which needed to be kept dry had been hoisted from the outer door and the street to the spacious attic, this was now prevented by the projecting figures of the nude men and the bears. Therefore it became necessary to hoist the goods to be stored in the attic from the courtyard, which caused delay and hindrances of many kinds. Various expedients had been suggested, but the women opposed them all, for they were glad that the ugly casks and bales no longer found their way to the garret past their windows, and it also gratified their arrogance that they were no longer visible from the street.



Siebenburg now looked up at the huge escutcheon and recalled the day when, after having been specially favoured by Isabella Eysvogel at a dance in the Town Hall, he had paused in the same place. A long line of laden waggons had just stopped in front of the door surmounted by the double escutcheon, and if he had previously hesitated whether to profit by the favour of Isabella, whose haughty majesty, which attracted him, also inspired him with a faint sense of uneasiness, he was now convinced how foolish it would be not to forge the iron which seemed aglow in his favour. What riches the menservants were carrying into the vaulted entry, which was twice as large as the one in the Orlieb mansion ! Besides, the escutcheon with the count's coronet had given the knight assurance that he would have no cause to be ashamed, in an assembly of his peers, of his alliance with the Nuremberg maiden. Isabella's hand could undoubtedly free him from the oppressive burden of his debts, and she was certainly a magnificent woman ! How well, too, her tall figure would suit him and the Siebenburgs, whose name was said to be derived from the seven feet of stature which some of them measured !

Now he again remembered the hour when she had laid her slender hand in his. For a brief period he had been really happy ; his heart had not felt so light since early childhood, though at first he had ventured to confess only one half his load

of debt to his father-in-law. He had even assumed fresh obligations to relieve his brothers from their most pressing cares. They had attended his brilliant wedding, and it had flattered his vanity to show them what he could accomplish as the wealthy Eysvogel's son-in-law.

But how quickly all this had changed! He had learned that, besides the woman who had given him her heart and inspired him with a passion hitherto unknown, he had wedded two others.

Now, as the image of old Countess Rotterbach, Isabella's grandmother, forced itself upon his mind, he unconsciously knit his brow. He had not heard her say much, but with every word she bestowed upon him he was forced to accept something bitter. She rarely left her place in the armchair in the bow window in the sitting-room, but it seemed as if her little eyes possessed the power of piercing walls and doors, for she knew everything that concerned him, even his greatest secrets, which he believed he had carefully concealed. More on her account than on that of his mother-in-law, who did nothing except what the former commanded, he had repeatedly tried to remove with his wife to the estate of Tannenreuth, which had been assigned to him on the day of the marriage, that its revenues might support the young couple, but the mother and grandmother detained his wife, and their wishes were more to her than his. Perhaps, however, he might have induced her to go with him had not

his father-in-law made his debts a snare, which he drew whenever it was necessary to stifle his wishes, and he, too, wanted to retain his daughter at home.

Since Wolff's return from Italy he had become aware that the stream of gold from the Eysvogel coffers flowed more sparingly, or even failed altogether to satisfy his extravagant tastes. Therefore his relations with his brother-in-law, whose prudent caution he considered avarice, and whose earnest protests against his often unprecedented demands frequently roused his ire, became more and more unfriendly.

The inmates of the Eysvogel house rendered his home unendurable, and from the experiences of his bachelor days he knew only too well where mirth reigned in Nuremberg. So he became a rare guest at the Eysvogels, and when Isabella found herself neglected and deceived, she made him feel her resentment in her own haughty and—as soon as she deemed herself injured—harsh manner.

At first her displeasure troubled him sorely, but the ardent passion which had absorbed him during the early days of their marriage had died out, and only flamed up with its old fervour occasionally; but at such times the haughty, neglected wife repulsed him with insulting severity.

Yet she had never permitted any one to disparage her husband behind his back. True, Sie-

benburg did not know this, but he perceived more and more plainly that both the Eysvogels, father and son, were oppressed by some grave anxiety, and that the sums which Wolff now paid him no longer sufficed to hold his creditors in check. He was not accustomed to impose any restraint upon himself, and thus it soon became known throughout the city that he did not live at peace with his wife and her family.

Yet five weeks ago matters had appeared to improve. The birth of the twins had brought something new into his life, which drew him nearer to Isabella.

The children at first seemed to him two lovely miracles. Both boys, both exactly like him. When they were brought to him on their white, lace-trimmed pillows, his heart had swelled with joy, and it was his greatest delight to gaze at them.

This was the natural result.

He, the stalwart Siebenburg, had not become the father of one ordinary boy, but of two little knights at once. When he returned home—even if his feet were unsteady—his first visit was to them, and he had often felt that he was far too poor and insignificant to thank his neglected wife aright for so precious a gift.

Whenever this feeling took possession of him he expressed his love to Isabella with tender humility; while she, who had bestowed her hand upon

him solely from love, forgot all her wrongs, and her heart throbbed faster with grateful joy when she saw him, with fatherly pride, carry the twins about with bent knees, as if their weight was too heavy for his giant arms to bear.

The second week after their birth Isabella fell slightly ill. Her mother and grandmother undertook the nursing, and as the husband found them both with the twins whenever he came to see the infants and their mother, the sick-room grew distasteful to him. Again, as before their birth, he sought compensation outside of the house for the annoyance caused by the women at home; but the memory of the little boys haunted him, and when he met his companions at the tavern he invited them to drink the children's health in the host's best wine.

So life went on until the Reichstag brought the von Montforts, whom he had met at a tournament in Augsburg, to the city of Nuremberg.

Mirth reigned wherever Countess Cordula appeared, and Siebenburg needed amusement and joined the train of her admirers—with what evil result he now clearly perceived for the first time.

He again stood before the stately dwelling where he had hoped to find luxury and wealth, but where his heart now throbbed more anxiously than those of his kinsmen had formerly done in the impoverished castle of his father, who had died so long ago.

The Eysvogel dwelling, with its showy escutcheon above the door, was threatened by want, and hand in hand with it, he knew, the most hideous of all her children—disgrace.

Now he also remembered what he himself had done to increase the peril menacing the ancient commercial house. Perhaps the old man within was relying upon the estate of Tannenreuth, which he had assigned to him, to protect some post upon which much depended, and he had gambled it away. This must now be confessed, and also the amount of his own debts.

An unpleasant task confronted him but, humiliating and harassing as was the interview awaiting him beyond the threshold before which he still lingered, at least he would not find Wolff there. This seemed a boon, since for the first time he would have felt himself in the wrong in the presence of his unloved brother-in-law. Even the burden of his debts weighed less heavily on his conscience than the irritating words with which he had induced his father-in-law to break off Wolff's betrothal to Els Ortlieb. The act was base and malicious. Greatly as he had erred, he had never before been guilty of such a deed, and with a curse upon himself on his bearded lips he approached the door; but when half way to it he stopped again and looked up to the second-story windows behind which the twins slept. With what delight he had always thought of them! But this time the

recollection of the little boys was spoiled by Countess Cordula's message to his wife to rear them so that they would not be like him, their father.

An evil wish! And yet the warmest love could have devised no better one in behalf of the true welfare of the boys.

He told himself so as he passed beneath the escutcheon through the heavy open door with its iron ornaments. He was expected, the steward told him, but he arched his broad breast as if preparing for a wrestling match, pulled his mustache still longer, and went up the stairs.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE spacious, lofty sitting-room which Seitz Siebenburg entered looked very magnificent. Gay Flanders tapestries hung on the walls. The ceiling was slightly vaulted, and in the centre of each mesh of the net designed upon it glittered a richly gilded kingfisher from the family coat of arms. Bear and leopard skins lay on the cushions, and upon the shelf which surrounded three sides of the apartment stood costly vases, gold and silver utensils, Venetian mirrors and goblets. The chairs and furniture were made of rare woods inlaid with ebony and mother of pearl, brought by way of Genoa from Moorish Spain. In the bow window jutting out into the street, where the old grandmother sat in her armchair, two green and yellow parrots on brass perches interrupted the conversation, whenever it grew louder, with the shrill screams of their ugly voices.

Siebenburg found all the family except Wolff and the twins. His wife was half sitting, half reclining, on a divan. When Seitz entered she raised her head from the white arm on which it had rested,



turned her oval face with its regular features towards him, and gathered up the fair locks which, released from their braids, hung around her in long, thick tresses. Her eyes showed that she had been weeping violently, and as her husband approached she again sobbed painfully.

Her grandmother seemed annoyed by her lamentations for, pointing to Isabella's tears, she exclaimed sharply, glancing angrily at Siebenburg: "It's a pity for every one of them!"

The knight's blood boiled at the words, but they strengthened his courage. He felt relieved from any consideration for these people, not one of whom, except the poor woman shedding such burning tears, had given him occasion to return love for love. Had they flowed only for the lost wealth, and not for him and the grief he caused Isabella, they would not have seemed "a pity" to the old countess.

Siebenburg's breath came quicker.

The gratitude he owed his father-in-law certainly did not outweigh the humiliations with which he, his weak wife, and ill-natured mother-in-law had embittered his existence.

Even now the old gentleman barely vouchsafed him a greeting. After he had asked about his son, called himself a ruined man, and upbraided the knight with insulting harshness because his brothers—the news had been brought to him a short time before—were the robbers who had seized his

goods, and the old countess had chimed in with the exclamation, "They are all just fit for the executioner's block!" Seitz could restrain himself no longer; nay, it gave him actual pleasure to show these hated people what he had done, on his part, to add to their embarrassments. He was no orator, but now resentment loosened his tongue, and with swift, scornful words he told Herr Casper that, as the son-in-law of a house which liked to represent itself as immensely rich, he had borrowed from others what—he was justified in believing it—had been withheld through parsimony. Besides, his debts were small in comparison with the vast sums Herr Casper had lavished in maintaining the impoverished estates of the Rotterbach kindred. Like every knight whose own home was not pleasant, he sometimes gambled; and when, yesterday, ill luck pursued him and he lost the estate of Tannenreuth, he sincerely regretted the disaster, but it could not be helped.

Terror and rage had sealed the old countess's lips, but now they parted in the hoarse cry: "You deserve the wheel and the gallows, not the honourable block!" and her daughter, Rosalinde Eysvogel, repeated in a tone of sorrowful lamentation, "Yes, the wheel and the gallows."

A scornful laugh from Siebenburg greeted the threat, but when Herr Casper, white as death and barely able to control his voice, asked whether this incredible confession was merely intended to

frighten the women, and the knight assured him of the contrary, he groaned aloud: "Then the old house must succumb to disgraceful ruin."

Years of life spent together may inspire and increase aversion instead of love, but they undoubtedly produce a certain community of existence. The bitter anguish of his aged household companion, the father of his wife, to whom bonds of love still unsevered united him, touched even Seitz Siebenburg. Besides, nothing moves the heart more quickly than the grief of a proud, stern man. Herr Casper's confession did not make him dearer to the knight, but it induced him to drop the irritating tone which he had assumed, and in an altered voice he begged him not to give up his cause as lost without resistance. For his daughter's sake old Herr Ortlieb must lend his aid. Els, with whom he had just spoken, would cling firmly to Wolff, and try to induce her father to do all that was possible for her lover's house. He would endeavour to settle with his own creditors himself. His sharp sword and strong arm would be welcome everywhere, and the booty he won—— Here he was interrupted by the grandmother's query in a tone of cutting contempt: "Booty? On the highway, do you mean?"

Once more the attack from the hostile old woman rendered the knight's decision easier, for, struggling not to give way to his anger, he answered: "Rather, I think, in the Holy Land, in

the war against the infidel Saracens. At any rate, my presence would be more welcome anywhere than in this house, whose roof shelters you, Countess. If, Herr Casper, you intend to share with my wife and the twins what is left after the old wealth has gone, unfortunately, I cannot permit you to do so. I will provide for them also. True, it was your duty; for ever since Isabella became my wife you have taken advantage of my poverty and impaired my right to command her. That must be changed from this very day. I have learned the bitter taste of the bread which you provide. I shall confide them to my uncle, the Knight Heideck. He was my dead mother's only brother, and his wife, as you know, is the children's godmother. They are childless, and would consider it the most precious of gifts to have such boys in the castle. My deserted wife must stay with him, while I—I know not yet in what master's service—provide that the three are not supported only by the charity of strangers——”

“Oh, Seitz, Seitz!” interrupted Isabella, in a tone of urgent entreaty. She had risen from her cushions, and was hurrying towards him. “Do not go! You must not go so!”

Her tall figure nestled closely against him as she spoke, and she threw her arms around his neck; but he kissed her brow and eyes, saying, with a gentleness which surprised even her: “You are very kind, but I cannot, must not remain here.”

"The children, the little boys!" she exclaimed again, gazing up at him with love-beaming eyes.

Then his tortured heart seemed to shrink, and, pressing his hand on his brow, he paused some time ere he answered gloomily: "It is for them that I go. Words have been spoken which appeal to me, and to you, too, Isabella: 'See that the innocent little creatures are reared to be unlike their unhappy father.' And the person who uttered them——"

"A sage, a great sage," giggled the countess, unable to control her bitter wrath against the man whom she hated; but Siebenburg fiercely retorted:

"Although no sage, at least no monster spitting venom."

"And you permit this insult to be offered to your grandmother?" Frau Rosalinde Eysvogel wailed to her daughter as piteously as if the injury had been inflicted on herself. But Isabella only clung more closely to her husband, heeding neither her mother's appeal nor her father's warning not to be deluded by Siebenburg's empty promises.

While the old countess vainly struggled for words, Rosalinde Eysvogel stood beside the lofty mantelpiece, weeping softly. Before Siebenburg appeared, spite of the early hour and the agitating news which she had just received, she had used her leisure for an elaborate toilette. A long trailing robe of costly brocade, blue on the left side and yellow on the right, now floated around her tall

figure. When the knight returned she had looked radiant in her gold and gems, like a princess. Now, crushed and feeble, she presented a pitiable image of powerless yet offensively hollow splendour. It would have required too much exertion to assail her son-in-law with invectives, like her energetic mother; but when she saw her daughter, to whom she had already appealed several times in a tone of anguished entreaty, rest her proud head so tenderly on her husband's broad breast, as she had done during the first weeks of their marriage, but never since, the unhappy woman clearly perceived that the knight's incredible demand was meant seriously. What she had believed an idle boast he actually requested. Yonder hated intruder expected her to part with her only daughter, who was far more to her than her unloved husband, her exacting mother, or the son who restricted her wishes, whom she had never understood, and against whom her heart had long been hardened. But it could not be and, losing all self-control and dignity, she shrieked aloud, tore the blue headband from her hair and, repeating the "never" constantly as if she had gone out of her senses, gasped: "Never, never, never, so long as I live!"

As she spoke she rushed to her startled husband, pointed to her son-in-law, who still held his wife in a close embrace, and in a half-stifled voice commanded Herr Casper to strike down the gambler, robber, spendthrift, and kidnapper of chil-

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dren, or drive him out of the house like some savage, dangerous beast. Then she ordered Isabella to leave the profligate who wanted to drag her down to ruin; and when her daughter refused to obey, she burst into violent weeping, sobbing and moaning till her strength failed and she was really attacked with one of the convulsions she had often feigned, by the advice of her own mother, to extort from her husband the gratification of some extravagant wish.


Indignant, yet full of sincere sympathy, Herr Casper supported his wife, whose queenly beauty had once fired his heart, and in whose embrace he had imagined that he would be vouchsafed here below the joys of the redeemed. As she rested her head, with its long auburn tresses, still so luxuriant, upon his shoulder, exquisite pictures of the past rose before the mental vision of the elderly man; but the spell was quickly broken, for the kerchief with which he wiped her face was dyed red from her rouged cheeks.

A bitter smile hovered around his well-formed, beardless lips, and the man of business remembered the vast sums which he had squandered to gratify the extravagant wishes of the mother and daughter, and show these countesses that he, the burgher, in whose veins ran noble blood, understood as well as any man of their own rank how to increase the charm of life by luxury and splendour.

While he supported his wife, and the old countess was seeking to relieve her, Isabella also prepared to hasten to her mother's assistance, but her husband stopped her with resistless strength, whispering: "You know that these convulsions are not dangerous. Come with me to the children. I want to bid them farewell. Show me in this last hour, at least, that these women are not more to you than I." He released her as he spoke, and the mental struggle which for a short time made her bosom heave violently with her hurried breathing ended with a low exclamation, "I will come."

The nurse, whom Isabella sent out of the room when she entered with her husband, silently obeyed, but stopped at the door to watch. She saw the turbulent knight kneel beside the children's cradle before the wife whom he had so basely neglected, raise his tearful eyes to the majestic woman, whose stature was little less than his own and, lifting his clasped hands, make a confession which she could not hear; saw her draw him towards her, nestle with loving devotion against his broad breast, and place first one and then the other twin boy in his arms.

The young mother's cheeks as well as the father's were wet, but the eyes of both sparkled with grateful joy when Isabella, in taking leave of her husband, thanked him with a last loving kiss for the vow that, wherever he might go, he would treasure her and the children in his heart,





and do everything in his power to secure a fate that should be worthy of them.

As Siebenburg went downstairs he met his father-in-law on the second-story landing. Herr Casper, deadly pale, was clinging with his right hand to the baluster, pressing his left on his brow, as he vainly struggled for composure and breath. He had forgotten to strengthen himself with food and drink, and the terrible blows of fate which had fallen upon him during these last hours of trial crushed, though but for a short time, his still vigorous strength. The knight went nearer to help him, but when he offered Herr Casper his arm the old merchant angrily thrust it back and accepted a servant's support.

While the man assisted him upstairs he repented that he had yielded to resentment, and not asked his son-in-law to try to discover Wolff's hiding place, but no sooner had food and fiery wine strengthened him than his act seemed wise. The return of the business partner, without whose knowledge he had incurred great financial obligations, would have placed him in the most painful situation. The old gentleman would have been obliged to account to Wolff for the large sum which he owed to the Jew Pfefferkorn, the most impatient of his creditors, though he need not have told him that he had used it in Venice to gratify his love of gaming. How should he answer his son if he asked why he had rejected his betrothed

bride, and soon after condescended to receive her again as his daughter and enter into close relations with her father? Yet this must be done. Ernst Ortlieb was the only person who could help him. It had become impossible to seek aid from Herr Berthold Vorchtel, the man whose oldest son Wolff had slain, and yet he possessed the means to save the sinking ship from destruction.

When the news of the duel reached him the messenger's blanched face had made him believe that Wolff had fallen. In that moment he had perceived that his loss would have rendered him miserable for the rest of his life. This was a source of pleasure, for since Wolff had extorted his consent to the betrothal with Els Ortlieb, and thus estranged him from the Vorchtels, he had seriously feared that he had ceased to love him. Nay, in many an hour when he had cause to feel shame in the presence of his prudent, cautious, and upright partner, it had seemed as if he hated him. Now the fear of the judge whom he saw in Wolff was blended with sincere anxiety concerning his only son, whose breach of the peace menaced him with banishment—nay, if he could not pay the price of blood which the Vorchtels might demand, with death. Doubtless he had done many things to prejudice Wolff against his betrothed bride, yet he who had cast the first stone at her now felt that, in her simple purity, she would be capable of no repudiation of the fidelity she owed her future

husband. However strongly he had struggled against this conviction, he knew that she, if any one, could make his son happy—far happier than he had ever been with the tall, slender, snow-white, unapproachable countess, who had helped bring him to ruin.

While consuming the food and drink, he heard his wife, usually a most obedient daughter, disputing with her mother. This was fortunate; for, if they were at variance, he need not fear that they would act as firm allies against him when he expressed the wish to have Wolff's marriage solemnised as soon as circumstances would permit.

It was not yet time to discuss the matter with any one. He would first go to the Jew Pfefferkorn once more to persuade him to defer his claims, and then, before the meeting of the Council, would repair to the Ortliebs, to commit to Herr Ernst the destiny of the Eysvogel firm and his partner Wolff, on which also depended the welfare of the young merchant's betrothed bride. If the father remained obdurate, if he resented the wrong he had inflicted yesterday upon him and his daughter, he was a lost man; for he had already availed himself of the good will of all those whose doors usually stood open to him. Doubtless the news of his recent severe losses were in every one's mouth, and the letter which he had just received threatened him with an indictment.

The luckless Siebenburg's creditors, too, would

now be added to his own. It was all very well for him to say that he would settle his debts himself. As soon as it was rumoured abroad that he had gambled away the estate of Tannenreuth, whose value gave the creditors some security, they would rise as one man, and the house assailed would be his, Casper Eysvogel's.

The harried man's thoughts of his son-in-law were by no means the most kindly.

Meanwhile the latter set out for the second distasteful interview of the morning.

His purpose was to make some arrangement with Heinz Schorlin about the lost estate and obtain definite knowledge concerning his quarrel with him, of which he remembered nothing except that intoxication and jealousy had carried him further than would have happened otherwise. He had undoubtedly spoken insultingly of Els; his words, when uttered against a lady, had been sharper than beseemed a knight. Yet was not any one who found a maiden alone at night with this man justified in doubting her virtue? In the depths of his soul he believed in her innocence, yet he avoided confessing it. Why should not the Swiss, whom Nature had given such power over the hearts of women, have also entangled his brother-in-law's betrothed bride in a love affair? Why should not the gay girl who had pledged her troth to a grave, dull fellow like Wolff, have been tempted into a little love dalliance with the bold, joyous Schorlin?

Not until he had received proof that he had erred would he submit to recall his charges.

He had left his wife with fresh courage and full of good intentions. Now that he was forced to bid her farewell, he first realised what she had been to him. No doubt both had much to forgive, but she was a splendid woman. Though her father's store-houses contained chests of spices and bales of cloth, he did not know one more queenly. That he could have preferred, even for a single moment, the Countess von Montfort, whose sole advantage over her was her nimble tongue and gay, bold manners, now seemed incomprehensible. He had joined Cordula's admirers only to forget at her feet the annoyances with which he had been wearied at home. He had but one thing for which to thank the countess—her remark concerning the future of the twins.

Yet was he really so base that it would have been a disgrace for his darlings to resemble him? "No!" a voice within cried loudly, and as the same voice reminded him of the victories won in tournaments and sword combats, of the open hand with which, since he had been the rich Eysvogel's son-in-law, he had lent and given money to his brothers, and especially of the manly resolve to provide for his wife and children as a soldier in the service of some prince, another, lower, yet insistent, recalled other things. It referred to the time when, with his brothers, he had attacked a train of freight waggon and not cut down their

armed escort alone. The curse of a broad-shouldered Nordlinger carrier, whose breast he had pierced with a lance though he cried out that he was a father and had a wife and child to support, the shriek of the pretty boy with curling brown hair who clung to the bridle of his steed as he rode against the father, and whose arm he had cut off, still seemed to ring in his ears. He also remembered the time when, after a rich capture on the highway which had filled his purse, he had ridden to Nuremberg in magnificent new clothes at the carnival season in order, by his brothers' counsel, to win a wealthy bride. Fortune and the saints had permitted him to find a woman to satisfy both his avarice and his heart, yet he had neither kept faith with her nor even showed her proper consideration. But, strangely enough, the warning voice reproached him still more sharply for having, in the presence of others, accused and disparaged his brother-in-law's betrothed bride, whose guilt he believed proved. Again he felt how ignoble and unworthy of a knight his conduct had been. Why had he pursued this course? Merely—he admitted it now—to harm Wolff, the monitor and niggard whom he hated; perhaps also because he secretly told himself that, if Wolff formed a happy marriage, he and his children, not Siebenburg's twin boys, would obtain the larger share of the Eysvogel property.

This greed of gain, which had brought him to

- Nuremberg to seek a wife, was probably latent in his blood, though his reckless accumulation of debts seemed to contradict it. Yesterday, at the Duke of Pomerania's, it had again led him into that wild, mad dice-throwing.

Seitz Siebenburg was no calm thinker. All these thoughts passed singly in swift flashes through his excited brain. Like the steady monotone of the bass accompanying the rise and fall of the air, he constantly heard the assurance that it would be a pity if his splendid twins should resemble him.

Therefore they must grow up away from his influence, under the care of his good uncle. With this man's example before their eyes they would become knights as upright and noble as Kunz Heideck, whom every one esteemed.

For the sake of the twins he had resolved to begin a new and worthier life himself. His wife would aid him, and love should lend him strength to conduct himself in future so that Countess von Montfort, and every one who meant well by his sons, might wish them to resemble their father.

He walked on, holding his head proudly erect. Seeing the first worshippers entering the Church of Our Lady, he went in, too, repeated several Pater-nosters, commended the little boys and their mother to the care of the gracious Virgin, and besought her to help him curb the turbulent impulses

which often led him to commit deeds he afterwards regretted.

Many people knew Casper Eysvogel's tall, haughty son-in-law and marvelled at the fervent devotion with which, kneeling in the first place he found near the entrance, beside two old women, he continued to pray. Was it true that the Eysvogel firm had been placed in a very critical situation by the loss of great trains of merchandise? One of his neighbours had heard him sigh, and declared that something must weigh heavily upon the "Mustache." She would tell her nephew Hemerlein, the belt-maker, to whom the knight owed large sums for saddles and harnesses, that he would be wise to look after his money betimes.

Siebenburg quitted the church in a more hopeful mood than when he entered it.

The prayers had helped him.

When he reached the fruit market he noticed that people gazed at him in surprise. He had paid no heed to his dress since the morning of the previous day, and as he always consumed large quantities of food and drink he felt the need of refreshment. Entering the first barber's shop, he had the stubble removed from his cheeks and chin, and arranged his disordered attire, and then, going to a taproom close by, ate and drank, without sitting down, what he found ready and, invigorated in body and mind, continued his walk.

The fruit market was full of busy life. Juicy



strawberries and early cherries, red radishes, heads of cabbages, bunches of greens, and long stalks of asparagus were offered for sale, with roses and auriculas, balsams and early pinks, in pots and bouquets, and the ruddy peasant lasses behind the stands, the stately burgher women in their big round hats, the daughters of the master workmen with their long floating locks escaping from under richly embroidered caps, the maidservants with neat little baskets on their round arms, afforded a varied and pleasing scene. Everything that reached the ear, too, was cheery and amusing, and rendered the knight's mood brighter.

Proud of his newly acquired power of resistance, he walked on, after yielding to the impulse to buy the handsomest bouquet of roses offered by the pretty flower girl Kuni, whom, on Countess Cordula's account, during the Reichstag he had patronised more frequently than usual. Without knowing why himself, he did not tell the pretty girl, who had already trusted him very often, for whom he intended it, but ordered it to be charged with the rest.

At the corner of the Bindergasse, where Heinz Schorlin lodged, he found a beggar woman with a bandaged head, whom he commissioned to carry the roses to the Eysvogel mansion and give them to his wife, Frau Isabella Siebenburg, in his—Sir Seitz's—name.

In front of the house occupied by the master cloth-maker Deichsler, where the Swiss had his

quarters, the tailor Ploss stopped him. He came from Heinz Schorlin, and reminded Siebenburg of his by no means inconsiderable debt; but the latter begged him to have patience a little longer, as he had met with heavy losses at the gaming table the night before, and Ploss agreed to wait till St. Heinrich's day.\*

How many besides the tailor had large demands! and when could Seitz begin to cancel his debts? The thought even darted through his mind that instead of carrying his good intentions into effect he had not paid for the roses—but flowers were so cheap in June!

Besides, he had no time to dwell upon this trifle, for while quieting the tailor he had noticed a girl who, notwithstanding the heat of the day, kept her face hidden so far under her *Riese* † that nothing but her eyes and the upper part of her nose were visible. She had given him a hasty nod and, if he was not mistaken, it was the Ortlieb sisters' maid, whom he had often seen.

When he again looked after the muffled figure she was hurrying up the cloth-maker's stairs.

It was Kätterle herself.

At the first landing she had glanced back, and in doing so pushed the kerchief aside. What could she want with the Swiss? It could scarcely be

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\* The 15th of July.

† A kerchief for the head, resembling a veil, made of fine linen.

anything except to bring him a message from one of her mistresses, doubtless Els.

So he had seen aright, and acted wisely not to believe the countess.

Poor Wolff! Deceived even when a betrothed lover! He did not exactly wish him happiness even now, and yet he pitied him.

Seitz could now stand before Heinz Schorlin with the utmost confidence. The Swiss must know how matters stood between the older E and himself, though his knightly duty constrained him to deny it to others. Siebenburg's self-reproaches had been vain. He had suspected no innocent girl—only called a faithless betrothed bride by the fitting name.

The matter concerning his estate of Tannenreuth was worse. It had been gambled away, and therefore forfeited. He had already given it up in imagination; it was only necessary to have the transfer made by the notary. The Swiss should learn how a true knight satisfies even the heaviest losses at the gaming table. He would not spare Heinz Schorlin. He meant to reproach the unprincipled fellow who by base arts had alienated the betrothed bride of an honest man—for that Wolff certainly was—when adverse circumstances prevented his watching the faithless woman himself. Twisting the ends of his mustache with two rapid motions, he knocked at the young knight's door.

## CHAPTER XVII.

**TWICE**, three times, Siebenburg rapped, but in vain. Yet the Swiss was there. His armour-bearer had told Seitz so downstairs, and he heard his voice within. At last he struck the door so heavily with the handle of his dagger that the whole house echoed with the sound. This succeeded; the door opened, and Biberli's narrow head appeared. He looked at the visitor in astonishment.

"Tell your master," said the latter imperiously, recognising Heinz Schorlin's servant, "that if he closes his lodgings against dunning trades-folk——"

"By your knock, my lord," Biberli interrupted, "we really thought the sword cutler had come with hammer and anvil. My master, however, need have no fear of creditors; for though you may not yet know it, Sir Knight, there are generous noblemen in Nuremberg during the Reichstag who throw away castles and lands in his favour at the gaming table."

"And hurl their fists even more swiftly into the faces of insolent varlets!" cried Siebenburg, rais-

ing his right hand threateningly. "Now take me to your master at once!"

"Or, at any rate, within his four walls," replied the servitor, preceding Seitz into the small anteroom from which he had come. "As to the 'at once,' that rests with the saints, for you must know——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted the knight. "Tell your master that Siebenburg has neither time nor inclination to wait in his antechamber."

"And certainly nothing could afford Sir Heinz Schorlin greater pleasure than your speedy departure," Biberli retorted.

"Insolent knave!" thundered Seitz, who perceived the insult conveyed in the reply, grasping the neck of his long robe; but Biberli felt that he had seized only the hood, swiftly unclasped it, and as he hurried to a side door, through which loud voices echoed, Siebenburg heard the low cry of a woman. It came from behind a curtain spread over some clothes that hung on the wall, and Seitz said to himself that the person must be the maid whom he had just met. She was in Els Ortlieb's service, and he was glad to have this living witness at hand.

If he could induce Heinz to talk with him here in the anteroom it would be impossible for her to escape. So, feigning that he had noticed nothing, he pretended to be much amused by Biberli's nimble flight. Forcing a laugh, he flung the hood at

his head, and before he opened the door of the adjoining room again asked to speak to his master.

Biberli replied that he must wait; the knight was holding a religious conversation with a devout old mendicant friar. If he might venture to offer counsel, he would not interrupt his master now; he had received very sad news, and the tailor who came to take his measure for his mourning garments had just left him. If Seitz had any business with the knight, and expected any benefit from his favour and rare generosity——

But Siebenburg let him get no farther. Forgetting the stratagem which was to lure Heinz hither, he burst into a furious rage, fiercely declaring that he sought favour and generosity from no man, least of all a Heinz Schorlin and, advancing to the door, flung the servant who barred his passage so rudely against the wall that he uttered a loud cry of pain.

Ere it had died away Heinz appeared on the threshold. A long white robe increased the pallor of his face, but yesterday so ruddy, and his reddened eyes showed traces of recent tears.

When he perceived what had occurred, and saw his faithful follower, with a face distorted by pain, rubbing his shoulder, his cheeks flushed angrily, and with just indignation he rebuked Siebenburg for his unseemly intrusion into his quarters and his brutal conduct.

Then, without heeding the knight, he asked

Biberli if he was seriously injured, and when the latter answered in the negative he again turned to Seitz and briefly enquired what he wanted. If he desired to own that, while in a state of senseless intoxication he had slandered modest maidens, and was ignorant of his actions when he staked his castle and lands against the gold lying before him, Heinz Schorlin, he might keep Tannenreuth. The form in which he would revoke his calumny to Jungfrau Ortlieb he would discuss with him later. At present his mind was occupied with more important matters than the senseless talk of a drunkard, and he would therefore request the knight to leave him.

As Heinz uttered the last words he pointed to the door, and this indiscreet, anything but inviting gesture robbed Siebenburg of the last remnant of composure maintained with so much difficulty.

Nothing is more infuriating to weak natures than to have others expect them to pursue a course opposite to that which, after a victory over baser impulses, they have recognised as the right one and intended to follow. He who had come to resign his lost property voluntarily was regarded by the Swiss as an importunate mendicant; he who stood here to prove that he was perfectly justified in accusing Els Ortlieb of a crime, Schorlin expected to make a revocation against his better knowledge. And what price did the insolent fellow demand for the restored estate and the right to

brand him as a slanderer? The pleasure of seeing the unwelcome guest retire as quickly as possible. No greater degree of contempt and offensive presumption could be imagined, and as Seitz set his own admirable conduct during the past few hours far above the profligate behaviour of the Swiss, he was fired with honest indignation and, far from heeding the white robe and altered countenance of his enemy, gave the reins to his wrath.

Pale with fury, he flung, as it were, the estate the Swiss had won from him at his feet, amid no lack of insulting words.

At first Heinz listened to the luckless gambler's outbreak of rage in silent amazement, but when the latter began to threaten, and even clapped his hand on his sword, the composure which never failed him in the presence of anything that resembled danger quickly returned.

He had felt a strong aversion to Siebenburg from their first meeting, and the slanderous words with which he had dragged in the dust the good name of a maiden who, Heinz knew, had incurred suspicion solely through his fault, had filled him with scorn. So, with quiet contempt, he let him rave on; but when the person to whom he had just been talking—the old Minorite monk whom he had met on the highroad and accompanied to Nuremberg—appeared at the door of the next room, he stopped Seitz with a firm “Enough!” pointed to the old man, and in brief, simple words, gave the



castle and lands of Tannenreuth to the monastery of the mendicant friars of the Franciscan order in Nuremberg.

Siebenburg listened with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders, then he said bitterly: "I thought that a life of poverty was the chief rule in the order of St. Francis. But no matter! May the gift won at the gaming table profit the holy Brothers. For you, Sir Knight, it will gain the favour of the Saint of Assisi, whose power is renowned. So you have acted wisely."

Here he hesitated; he felt choked with rage. But while the Minorite was thanking Heinz for the generous gift, Siebenburg's eyes again rested on the curtain behind which the maid was concealed.

It was now his turn to deal the Swiss a blow. The old mendicant friar was a venerable person whose bearing commanded respect, and Heinz seemed to value his good opinion. For that very reason the Minorite should learn the character of this patron of his order.

"Since you so earnestly desire to be rid of my company, Sir Heinz Schorlin," he continued, "I will fulfil your wish. Only just now you appeared to consider certain words uttered last night in reference to a lady——"

"Let that pass," interrupted Heinz with marked emphasis.

"I might expect that desire," replied Siebenburg scornfully; "for as you are in the act of gain-

ing the favour of Heaven by pious works, it will be agreeable to you——”

“What?” asked the Swiss sharply.

“You will surely desire,” was the reply, “to change conduct which is an offence to honourable people, and still more to the saints above. You who have estranged a betrothed bride from her lover and lured her to midnight interviews, no doubt suppose yourself safe from the future husband, whom the result of a duel—as you know—will keep from her side. But Wolff happens to be my brother-in-law, and if I feel disposed to take his place and break a lance with you——”

Heinz, pale as death, interrupted him, exclaiming in a tone of the deepest indignation: “So be it, then. We will have a tilt with lances, and then we will fight with our swords.”

Siebenburg looked at him an instant, as if puzzled by his adversary’s sharp assault, but quickly regained his composure and answered: “Agreed! In the joust\* with sharp weapons it will soon appear who has right on his side.”

“Right?” asked Heinz in astonishment, shrugging his shoulders scornfully.

“Yes, right,” cried the other furiously, “which you have ceased to prize.”

“So far from it,” the Swiss answered quietly, “that before we discuss the mode of combat with

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\* Single combat in the tourney.

the herald I must ask you to recall the insults with which yesterday, in your drunkenness, you injured the honour of a virtuous maiden in the presence of other knights and gentlemen."

"Whose protector," laughed Seitz, "you seem to have constituted yourself, by your own choice, in her bridegroom's place."

"I accept the position," replied Heinz with cool deliberation. "Not you, nay, I will fight in Wolff Eysvogel's stead—and with his consent, I think. I know him, and esteem him so highly——"

"That you invite his plighted bride to nocturnal love dalliance, and exchange love messages with her," interrupted the other.

This was too much for Heinz Schorlin and, with honest indignation, he cried: "Prove it! Or, by our Lord's blood!—My sword, Biberli!—Spite of the peace proclaimed throughout the land, you shall learn, ere you open your slandering lips again——"

Here he paused suddenly, for while Biberli withdrew to obey the command which, though it probably suited his wishes, he was slow in executing, doubtless that he might save his master from a reckless act, Siebenburg, frantic with fury, rushed to the curtain. Ere Heinz could interfere, he jerked it back so violently that he tore it from the fastenings and forced the terrified maid, whose arm he grasped, to approach the knight with him.

Heinz had seen Kätterle only by moonlight

and in the twilight, so her unexpected appearance gave him no information. He gazed at her enquiringly, with as much amazement as though she had risen from the earth. Siebenburg gave him no time to collect his thoughts, but dragged the girl before the monk and, raising his voice in menace, commanded: "Tell the holy Brother who you are, woman!"

"Kätterle of Sarnen," she answered, weeping.

"And whom do you serve?" the knight demanded.

"The Ortlieb sisters, Jungfrau Els and Jungfrau Eva," was the reply.

"The beautiful Es, as they are called here, holy Brother," said Siebenburg with a malicious laugh, "whose maid I recognise in this girl. If she did not come hither to mend the linen of her mistress's friend——"

But here Biberli, who on his return to the ante-room had been terrified by the sight of his sweetheart, interrupted the knight by turning to Heinz with the exclamation: "Forgive me, my lord. Surely you know that she is my betrothed bride. She came just now—scarcely a dozen Paternosters ago—to talk with me about the marriage."

Kätterle had listened in surprise to the bold words of her true and steadfast lover, yet she was not ill pleased, for he had never before spoken of their marriage voluntarily. At the same time she felt the obligation of aiding him and nodded

assent, while Siebenburg rudely interrupted the servant by calling to the monk: "Lies and deception, pious Brother. Black must be whitened here. She stole, muffled, to her mistress's gallant, to bring a message from the older beautiful E, with whom this godly knight was surprised last night."

Again the passionate outbreak of his foe restored the Swiss to composure. With a calmness which seemed to the servant incomprehensible, though it filled him with delight, he turned to the monk, saying earnestly and simply: "Appearances may be against me, Pater Benedictus. I will tell you all the circumstances at once. How this maid came here will be explained later. As for the maiden whom this man calls the older beautiful E, never—I swear it by our saint—have I sought her love or received from her the smallest token of her favour."

Then turning to Siebenburg he continued, still calmly, but with menacing sternness: "If I judge you aright, you will now go from one to another telling whom you found here, in order to injure the fair fame of the maiden whom your wife's valiant brother chose for his bride, and to place my name with hers in the pillory."

"Where Els Ortlieb belongs rather than in the honourable home of a Nuremberg patrician," retorted Siebenburg furiously. "If she became too base for my brother-in-law, the fault is yours. I shall certainly take care that he learns the truth


and knows where, and at what an hour, his betrothed bride met foreign heartbreakers. To open the eyes of others concerning her will also be a pleasant duty."

Heinz sprang towards Biberli to snatch the sword from his hand, but he held it firmly, seeking his master's eyes with a look of warning entreaty; but his faithful solicitude would have been futile had not the monk lent his aid. The old man's whispered exhortation to his young friend to spare the imperial master, to whom he was so deeply indebted, a fresh sorrow, restored to the infuriated young knight his power of self-control. Pushing the thick locks back from his brow with a hasty movement, he answered in a tone of the most intense contempt:

"Do what you will, but remember this: Beware that, ere the joust begins, you do not ride the rail instead of the charger. The maidens whose pure name you so yearn to sully are of noble birth, and if they appear to complain of you——"

"Then I will proclaim the truth," Siebenburg retorted, "and the Court of Love and Pursuivant at Arms will deprive you, the base seducer, of the right to enter the lists rather than me, my handsome knight!"

"So be it," replied Heinz quietly. "You can discuss the other points with my herald. Wolff Eysvogel, too—rely upon it—will challenge you, if you fulfil your base design."



Then, turning his back upon Seitz without a word of farewell, he motioned the monk towards the open door of the antechamber, and letting him lead the way, closed it behind them.

"He will come to you, you boaster!" Siebenburg shouted contemptuously after the Swiss, and then turned to Biberli and the maid with a patronising question; but the former, without even opening his lips in reply, hastened to the door and, with a significant gesture, induced the knight to retire.

Seitz submitted and hastened down the stairs, his eyes flashing as if he had won a great victory. At the door of the house he grasped the hilt of his sword, and then, with rapid movements, twisted the ends of his mustache. The surprise he had given the insolent Swiss by the discovery of his love messenger—it had acted like a spell—could not have succeeded better. And what had Schorlin alleged in justification? Nothing, absolutely nothing at all. Wolff Eysvogel's herald should challenge the Swiss, not him, who meant to open the deceived lover's eyes concerning his betrothed bride.

He eagerly anticipated the joust and the sword combat with Heinz. The sharper the herald's conditions the better. He had hurled more powerful foes than the Swiss from the saddle, and from knightly "courtoisie" not even used his strength without consideration. Heinz Schorlin should feel it.

He gazed around him like a victor, and throwing his head back haughtily he went down the Bindergasse, this time past the Franciscan monastery towards the Town Hall and the fish market. Eber, the sword cutler, lived there and, spite of the large sum he owed him, Seitz wished to talk with him about the sharp weapons he needed for the joust. On his way he gave his imagination free course. It showed him his impetuous onset, his enemy's fall in the sand, the sword combat, and the end of the joust, the swift death of his hated foe.

These pictures of the future occupied his thoughts so deeply that he neither saw nor heard what was passing around him. Many a person for whom he forgot to turn aside looked angrily after him. Suddenly he found his farther progress arrested. The crier had just raised his voice to announce some important tidings to the people who thronged around him between the Town Hall and the Franciscan monastery. Perhaps he might have succeeded in forcing a passage through the concourse, but when he heard the name "Ernst Ortlieb," in the monotonous speech of the city crier, he followed the remainder of his notice. It made known to the citizens of Nuremberg that, since the thunderstorm of the preceding night, a maid had been missing from the house of the Honourable Herr Ernst Ortlieb, of the Council, a Swiss by birth, Katharina of Sarnen, called Kätterle, a



woman of blameless reputation. Whoever should learn anything concerning the girl was requested to bring the news to the Ortlieb residence.

What did this mean?

If the girl had vanished at midnight and not returned to her employers since, she could scarcely have sought Heinz Schorlin as a messenger of love from Els. But if she had not come to the Swiss from one of the Es, what proof did he, Seitz, possess of the guilt of his brother-in-law's bride? How should he succeed in making Wolff understand that his beloved Els had wronged him if the maid was to play no part in proving it? Yesterday evening he had not believed firmly in her guilt; that very morning it had even seemed to him a shameful thing that he had cast suspicion upon her in the presence of others. The encounter with the maid at the Swiss knight's lodgings had first induced him to insist on his accusation so defiantly. And now? If Heinz Schorlin, with the help of the Ortliebs, succeeded in proving the innocence of those whom he had accused, then—ah, he must not pursue that train of thought—then, at the lady's accusation, he might be deprived of the right to enter the lists in the tournament; then all the disgrace which could be inflicted upon the slanderous defamer of character threatened him; then Wolff would summon him to a reckoning, as well as Heinz Schorlin. Wolff, whom he had begun to hate since, with his resistless arm of iron, he had exposed him for the

first time to the malicious glee of the bystanders in the fencing hall.

Yet it was not this which suddenly bowed his head and loudly admonished him that he had again behaved like a reckless fool. Cowardice was his least fault. He did not fear what might befall him in battle. Whether he would be barred out from the lists was the terrible question which darkened the bright morning already verging towards noon. He had charged Els with perfidy in the presence of others, and thereby exposed her, the plighted bride of a knight, to the utmost scorn. And besides—fool that he was!—his brothers had again attacked a train of waggons on the highway and would soon be called to account as robbers. This would certainly lead the Swiss and others to investigate his own past, and the Pursuivant at Arms excluded from joust and tourney whoever “injured trade or merchant.” What would not his enemy, who was in such high favour with the Emperor, do to compass his destruction? But—and at the thought he uttered a low imprecation—how could he ride to the joust if his father-in-law closed his strong box which, moreover, was said to be empty? If the old man was forced to declare himself bankrupt Siebenburg’s creditors would instantly seize his splendid chargers and costly suits of armour, scarcely one half of which were paid for. How much money he needed as security in case of defeat! His sole property was debts. Yet—the

thought seemed like an illumination—his wife's valuable old jewels could probably still be saved, and she might be induced to give him part of the ornaments for the tournament. He need only make her understand that his honour and that of the twins were at stake. Would that Heaven might spare his boys such hours of anxiety and self-accusation!

But what was this? Was he deluding himself? Did his over-excited imagination make him hear a death knell pealing for his honour and his hopes, which must be borne to their grave? Yet no! All the citizens and peasants, men and women, great and small, who thronged the salt market, which he had just entered, raised their heads to listen with him; for from every steeple at once rang the mournful death knell which announced to the city the decease of an "honourable" member of the Council, a secular or ecclesiastical prince. The mourning banner was already waving on the roof of the Town Hall, towards which he turned. Men in the service of the city were hoisting other black flags upon the almshouse, and now the Hegelein,\* in mourning garments, mounted on a steed caparisoned with *crêpe*, came riding by at the head of other horsemen clad in sable, proclaiming to the throng that Hartmann, the Emperor Rudolph's promising son, had found an untimely end. The

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\* Proclaimer of decrees.

noble youth was drowned while bathing in the Rhine.

It seemed as if a frost had blighted a blooming garden. The gay bustle in the market place was paralysed. The loud sobs of many women blended with exclamations of grief and pity from bearded lips which had just been merrily bargaining for salt and fish, meat and game. Messengers with *crêpe* on their hats or caps forced a passage through the throng, and a train of German knights, priests, and monks passed with bowed heads, bearing candles in their hands, between the Town Hall and St. Sebald's Church towards the corn magazine and the citadel.

Meanwhile dark clouds were spreading slowly over the bright-blue vault of the June sky. A flock of rooks hovered around the Town Hall, and then flew, with loud cries, towards the castle.

Seitz watched them indifferently. Even the great omnipotent sovereign there had his own cross to bear; tears flowed in his proud palace also, and sighs of anguish were heard. And this was just. He had never wished evil to any one who did not injure him, but even if he could have averted this sore sorrow from the Emperor Rudolph he would not have stirred a finger. His coronation had been a blow to him and to his brothers. Formerly they had been permitted to work their will on the highways, but the Hapsburg, the Swiss, had pitilessly stopped their brigandage. Now for the

first time robber-knights were sentenced and their castles destroyed. The Emperor meant to transform Germany into a sheepfold, Absbach exclaimed. The Siebenburg brothers were his faithful allies, and though they complained that the joyous, knightly clank of arms would be silenced under such a sovereign, they themselves took care that the loud battle shouts, cries of pain, and shrieks for aid were not hushed on the roads used for traffic by the merchants. But this was not Seitz's sole reason for shrugging his shoulders at the expressions of the warmest sympathy which rose around him. The Emperor was tenderly attached to Heinz Schorlin, and the man who was so kindly disposed to his foe could never be his friend. Perhaps to-morrow Rudolph might behead his brothers and elevate Heinz Schorlin to still greater honours. Seitz, whose eyes had overflowed with tears when the warder of his native castle lost his aged wife, who had been his nurse, now found no cause to grieve with the mourners.

So he continued his way, burdened with his own anxieties, amid the tears and lamentations of the multitude. The numerous retinue of servants in the Eysvogel mansion were moving restlessly to and fro; the news of the prince's death had reached them. Herr Casper had left the house. He was probably at Herr Ernst Ortlieb's. If the latter had already learned what he, Seitz Siebenburg, had said at the gaming table of his daughter, perhaps

his hand had dealt the first decisive blow at the tottering house where, so long as it stood, his wife and the twins would under any circumstances find shelter. Resentment against the Swiss, hatred, and jealousy, had made him a knave, and at the same time the most shortsighted of fools.

As he approached the second story, in which the nursery was situated and where he expected to find his wife, it suddenly seemed as if a star had risen amid the darkness. If he poured out his heart to Isabella and let her share the terrible torture of his soul, perhaps it would awaken a tender sympathy in the woman who still loved him, and who was dearer to him than he could express. Her jewels were certainly very valuable, but far more precious was the hope of being permitted to rest his aching head upon her breast and feel her slender white hand push back the hair from his anxious brow. Oh, if misfortune would draw her again as near to him as during the early months of their married life and directly before it, he could rise from his depression with fresh vigour and transform the battle, now half lost, into victory. Besides, she was clever and had power over the hearts of her family, so perhaps she might point out the pathway of escape, which his brain, unused to reflection, could not discover.

His heart throbbed high as, animated by fresh hope, he entered the corridor from which opened the rooms which he occupied with her. But his

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wish to find her alone was not to be fulfilled ; several voices reached him.

What was the meaning of the scene ?

Isabella, her face deadly pale, and her tall figure drawn up to its full height, stood before the door of the nursery with a stern, cold expression on her lovely lips, like a princess pronouncing sentence upon a criminal. She was panting for breath, and before her, her mother, and her grandmother, Countess Cordula's pretty page, whom Siebenburg knew only too well, was moving to and fro with eager gestures. He held in his hand the bunch of roses which Seitz had sent to his newly-won wife and darling as a token of reconciliation, and Siebenburg heard his clear, boyish tones urge: "I have already said so and, noble lady, you may believe me, this bouquet, which the woman brought us, was intended for my gracious mistress, Countess von Montfort. It was meant to give her a fair morning greeting, and—— Do not let this vex you, for it was done only in the joyous game of love, as custom dictated. Ever since we came here your lord has daily honoured my countess with the loveliest flowers whose buds unfold in the region near the Rhine. But my gracious mistress, as you have already heard, believes that you, noble lady, have a better right to these unusually beautiful children of the spring than she who last evening bade your lord behold in you, not in her, fair lady, the most fitting object of his homage. So she sent

me hither, most gracious madam, to lay what is yours at your feet."

As he spoke, the agile boy, with a graceful bow, tried to place the flowers in Isabella's hand, but she would not receive the bouquet, and the abrupt gesture with which she pushed them back flung the nosegay on the floor. Paying no further heed to it, she answered in a cold, haughty tone: "Thank your mistress, and tell her that I appreciated her kind intention, but the roses which she sent me were too full of thorns." Then, turning her back on the page, she advanced with majestic pride to the door of the nursery.

Her mother and grandmother tried to follow, but Siebenburg pressed between them and his wife, and his voice thrilled with the anguish of a soul overwhelmed by despair as he cried imploringly: "Hear me, Isabella! There is a most unhappy misunderstanding here. By all that is sacred to me, by our love, by our children, I swear those roses were intended for you, my heart's treasure, and for you alone."

But Countess Rotterbach cut him short by exclaiming with a loud chuckle: "The unripe early pears will probably come from the fruit market to the housewife's hands later; the roses found their way to Countess von Montfort more quickly."

The malicious words were followed like an echo by Frau Rosalinde's tearful: "It is only too true. This also!"



The knight, unheeding the angry, upbraiding woman, hastened in pursuit of his wife to throw himself at her feet and confess the whole truth; but she, who had heard long before that Sir Seitz was paying Countess Cordula more conspicuous attention than beseemed a faithful husband, and who, after the happy hour so recently experienced, had expected, until the arrival of the page, the dawn of brighter, better days, now felt doubly abased, deceived, betrayed.

Without vouchsafing the unfortunate man even a glance or a word, she entered the nursery before he reached her; but he, feeling that he must follow her at any cost, laid his hand on the lock of the door and tried to open it. The strong oak resisted his shaking and pulling. Isabella had shot the heavy iron bolt into its place. Seitz first knocked with his fingers and then with his clenched fist, until the grandmother exclaimed: "You have destroyed the house, at least spare the doors."

Uttering a fierce imprecation, he went to his own chamber, hastily thrust into his pockets all the gold and valuables which he possessed, and then went out again into the street. His way led him past Kuni, the flower girl from whom he had bought the roses. The beggar who was to carry them to his wife did not hear distinctly, on account of her bandaged head, and not understanding the knight, went to the girl from whom she had seen him purchase the blossoms to ask where they be-

longed. Kuni pointed to the lodgings of the von Montforts, where she had already sent so many bouquets for Siebenburg. The latter saw both the flower-seller and the beggar woman, but did not attempt to learn how the roses which he intended for his wife had reached Countess Cordula. He suspected the truth, but felt no desire to have it confirmed. Fate meant to destroy him, he had learned that. The means employed mattered little. It would have been folly to strive against the superior power of such an adversary. Let ruin pursue its course. His sole wish was to forget his misery, though but for a brief time. He knew he could accomplish this by drink, so he entered the Mirror wine tavern and drained bumper after bumper with a speed which made the landlord, though he was accustomed to marvellous performances on the part of his guests, shake the head set on his immensely thick neck somewhat suspiciously.

The few persons present had gathered in a group and were talking sadly about the great misfortune which had assailed the Emperor. The universal grief displayed so hypocritically, as Seitz thought, angered him, and he gazed at them with such a sullen, threatening look that no one ventured to approach him. Sometimes he stared into his wine, sometimes into vacancy, sometimes at the vaulted ceiling above. He harshly rebuffed the landlord and the waiter who tried to accost him, but when the peasant's prediction was fulfilled and

the thunderstorm of the preceding night was followed at midnight by one equally severe, he arose and left the hostelry. The rain tempted him into the open air. The taproom was so sultry, so terribly sultry. The moisture of the heavens would refresh him.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE fury of the tempest had ceased, but the sky was still obscured by clouds. A cool breeze blew from the northeast through the damp, heavy air.

Heinz Schorlin was coming from the fortress, and after crossing the Diligengasse went directly towards his lodgings. His coat of mail, spurs, and helmeted head were accoutrements for the saddle, yet he was on foot. A throng of men, women, and children, whispering eagerly together, accompanied him. One pointed him out to another, as if there was something unusual about him. Two stalwart soldiers in the pay of the city followed, carrying his saddle and the equipments of his horse, and kept back the boys or women who boldly attempted to press too near.

Heinz did not heed the throng. He looked pale, and his thick locks, falling in disorder from under his helmet, floated around his face. The chain armour on his limbs and his long surcoat were covered with mire. The young knight, usually so trim, looked disordered and, as it were,

thrown off his balance. His bright face bore the impress of a horror still unconquered, as he gazed restlessly into vacancy, and seemed to be seeking something, now above and now in the ground.

The pretty young hostess, Frau Barbara Deichsler, holding her little three-year-old daughter by the hand, stood in front of the house in the Binder-gasse where he lodged. The knight usually had a pleasant or merry word for her, and a gay jest or bit of candy for Annele. Nay, the young noble, who was fond of children, liked to toss the little one in his arms and play with her.

Frau Barbara had already heard that, as Heinz was returning from the fortress, the lightning had struck directly in front of him, killing his beautiful dun charger, which she had so often admired. It had happened directly before the eyes of the guard, and the news had gone from man to man of the incredible miracle which had saved the life of the young Swiss, the dearest friend of the Emperor's dead son.

When Heinz approached the door Frau Barbara stepped forward with Annele to congratulate him that the dear saints had so graciously protected him, but he only answered gravely: "What are we mortals? Rejoice in the child, Frau Barbara, so long as she is spared to you."

He passed into the entry as he spoke, but Frau Deichsler hastily prepared to call his armour-bearer, a grey-bearded Swiss who had served the

knight's father and slept away the hours not devoted to his duties or to the wine cup. He must supply the place of Biberli, who had left the house a long time before, and for the first time in many years was keeping his master waiting. But Heinz knew where he was, and while the armour-bearer was divesting him, awkwardly enough, of his suit of mail and gala attire, he was often seized with anxiety about his faithful follower, though many things with which the morning had burdened his soul lay nearer to his heart.

Never had he been so lucky in gambling as last night in the Duke of Pomerania's quarters. Biberli's advice to trust to the two and five had been repeatedly tested, and besides the estate of Tannenreuth, which Siebenburg had staked against all his winnings, he had brought home more gold than he had ever seen before.

Yet he had gone to rest in a mood by no means joyous. It was painful to him to deprive any one of his lands and home. He had even resisted accepting Siebenburg's reckless stake, but his obstinate persistence and demand could not be opposed. The calumnies by which the "Mustache" had assailed the innocent Els Ortlieb haunted him, and many others had shown their indignation against the traducer. Probably thirty gentlemen at the gaming table had been witnesses of these incidents, and if, to-morrow, it was in everybody's mouth that he, Heinz, had been caught at mid-

night in an interview with the elder beautiful Ortlieb E, the fault was his, and he would be burdened with the guilt of having sullied the honour and name of a pure maiden, the betrothed bride of an estimable man.

And Eva!

When he woke in the morning his first thought had been of her. She had seemed more desirable than ever. But his relatives at home, and the counsel Biberli had urged upon him during their nocturnal wandering, had constantly interposed between him and the maiden whom he so ardently loved. Besides, it seemed certain that the passion which filled his heart must end unhappily. Else what was the meaning of this unexampled good luck at the gaming table? The torture of this thought had kept him awake a long time. Then he had sunk into a deep, dreamless sleep. In the morning Biberli, full of delight, roused him, and displayed three large bags filled with florins and zecchins, the gains of the night before.

The servant had begged to be permitted to count the golden blessing, which in itself would suffice to buy the right to use the bridge from the city of Luzerne twice over, and the best thing about which was that it would restore the peace of mind of his lady mother at Schorlin Castle.

Now, in the name of all the saints, let him continue his life of liberty, and leave the somnam-

bulist to walk over the roofs, and suffer Altrosen, who had worn her colour so patiently, to wed the countess.

But how long the servitor's already narrow face became when Heinz, with a grave resolution new to Biberli, answered positively that no ducats would stray from these bags to Schorlin Castle. If, last night, anxiety had burdened his mind like the corpse of a murdered man, these gains weighed upon his soul like the loathsome body of a dead cat. Never in his whole life had he felt so poor as with this devil's money. The witch-bait which Biberli had given him with the two and the five had drawn it out of the pockets of his fellow gamblers. He would be neither a cut-purse nor a dealer in the black arts. The wages of hell should depart as quickly as they came. While speaking, he seized the second largest bag and gave it to the servant, exclaiming: "Now keep your promise to Kätterle like an honest man. The poor thing will have a hard time at her employer's. I make but one condition: you are to remain in my service. I can't do without you."

While the armour-bearer, in the agile Biberli's place, was handing him the garments to be worn in the house, Heinz again remembered how the faithful fellow had thrown himself on his knees and kissed his master's hands and arms in the excess of his joyful surprise, and yet he had felt as if a dark cloud was shadowing the brightness of





his soul. The morning sun had shone so radiantly into his window, and Annele had come with such bewitching shyness to bring him a little bunch of lilies of the valley with a rose in the centre, and a pleasant morning greeting from her mother, that the cloud could not remain, yet it had only parted occasionally to close again speedily, though it was less dense and dark than before.

Yet he had taken the child in his arms and looked down into the narrow street to show her the people going to market so gaily in the early morning. But he soon put her down again, for he recognised in a horseman approaching on a weary steed Count Curt Gleichen, the most intimate friend of young Prince Hartmann and himself, and when he called to him he had slid from his saddle with a faint greeting.

Heinz instantly rushed out of the house to meet him, but he had found him beside his steed, which had sunk on its knees, and then, trembling and panting, dragged itself, supported by its rider's hand, into the entry. There it fell, rolled over on its side, and stretched its limbs stiffly in death. It was the third horse which the messenger had killed since he left the Rhine, yet he was sure of arriving too soon; for he had to announce to a father the death of his promising son.

Heinz listened, utterly overwhelmed, to the narrative of the eye-witness, who described how Hartmann, ere he could stretch out a hand to save

him, had been dragged into the depths by the waves of the Rhine.

In spite of the sunny brightness of the morning the young Swiss had had a presentiment of some great misfortune, and had told himself that he would welcome it if it relieved him from the burden which had darkened his soul since the disgraceful good luck of the previous night. Now it had happened, and how gladly he would have continued to bear the heaviest load to undo the past. He had sobbed on his friend's breast like a child, accusing Heaven for having visited him with this affliction.

Hartmann had been not only his friend but his pupil—and what a pupil! He had instructed him in horsemanship and the use of the sword, and during the last year shared everything with him and young Count Gleichen as if they were three brothers and, like a brother, the prince had constantly grown closer to his heart. Had he, Heinz, accompanied Hartmann to the Rhine and been permitted to remain with him, neither or both would have fallen victims to the river! And Hartmann's aged father, the noble man to whom he owed everything, and who clung with his whole soul to the beloved youth, his image in mind and person—how would the Emperor Rudolph endure this? But a few months ago death had snatched from him his wife, the love of his youth, the mother of his children, the companion of his glorious career! The thought of

him stirred Heinz to the depths of his soul, and he would fain have hastened at once to the castle to help the stricken father bear the new and terrible burden imposed upon him. But he must first care for the messenger of these terrible tidings who, with lips white from exhaustion, needed refreshment.

Biberli, who saw and thought of everything, had already urged the hostess to do what she could, and sent the servant to the tailor that, when Heinz rode to the fortress, he might not lack the mourning—a tabard would suffice—which could be made in a few hours.

Frau Barbara had just brought the lunch and promised to obey the command to keep the terrible news which she had just heard a secret from every one, that the rumor might not reach the fortress prematurely, when another visitor appeared—Heinz Schorlin's cousin, Sir Arnold Maier of Silenen, a tall, broad-shouldered man of fifty, with stalwart frame and powerful limbs.

His grave, bronzed countenance, framed by a grey beard, revealed that he, too, brought no cheering news. He had never come to his young cousin's at so early an hour.

His intelligent, kindly grey eyes surveyed Heinz with astonishment. What had befallen the happy-hearted fellow? But when he heard the news which had wet the young knight's eyes with tears, his own lips also quivered, and his deep,

manly tones faltered as he laid his heavy hands on the mourner's shoulders and gazed tearfully into his eyes. At last he exclaimed mournfully: "My poor, poor boy! Pray to Him to whom we owe all that is good, and who tries us with the evil. Would to God I had less painful tidings for you!"

Heinz shrank back, but his cousin told him the tidings learned from a Swiss messenger scarcely an hour before. The dispute over the bridge toll had caused a fight. The uncle who supplied a father's place to Heinz and managed his affairs—brave old Walther Ramsweg—was killed; Schorlin Castle had been taken by the city soldiery and, at the command of the chief magistrate, razed to the ground. Wendula Schorlin, Heinz's mother, with her daughter Maria, had fallen into the hands of the city soldiers and been carried to the convent in Constance, where she and her youngest child now remained with the two older daughters.

Heinz, deeply agitated by the news, exclaimed: "Uncle Ramsweg, our kind second father, also in the grave without my being able to press his brave, loyal hand in farewell! And Maria, our singing bird, our nimble little squirrel, with those grave, world-weary Sisters! And my mother! You, too, like every one, love her, Cousin—and you know her. She who has been accustomed to command, and to manage the house and the lands, who like a saint dried tears far and near amid trouble

and deprivation—she, deprived of her own strong will, in a convent! Oh, Cousin, Cousin! To hear this, and not be able to rush upon the rabble who have robbed us of the home of our ancestors, as a boy crushes a snail shell! Can it be imagined? No Castle Schorlin towering high above the lake on the cliff at the verge of the forest. The room where we all saw the light of the world and listened to our mother's songs destroyed; the sacred chamber where the father who so lovingly protected us closed his eyes; the chapel where we prayed so devoutly and vowed to the Holy Virgin a candle from our little possessions, or, in the lovely month of May, brought flowers to her from our mother's little garden, the cliff, or the dark forest. The courtyard where we learned to manage a steed and use our weapons, the hall where we listened to the wandering minstrels, in ruins! Gone, gone, all gone! My mother and Maria weeping prisoners!"

Here his cousin broke in to show him that love was leading him to look on the dark side. His mother had chosen the convent for her daughter's sake; she was by no means detained there by force. She could live wherever she pleased, and her dowry, with what she had saved, would be ample to support her and Maria, in the city or the country, in a style suited to their rank.

This afforded Heinz some consolation, but enough remained to keep his grief alive, and his

voice sounded very sorrowful as he added: "That lessens the bitterness of the cup. But who will rebuild the ancient castle? Who will restore our uncle? And the Emperor, my beloved, fatherly master, dying of grief! Our Hartmann dead! Washed away like a dry branch which the swift Reuss seizes and hurries out of our sight! Too much, too hard, too terrible! Yet the sun shines as brightly as before! The children in the street below laugh as merrily as ever!"

Groaning aloud, he covered his face with his hands, and those from whom he might have expected consolation were forced to leave him in the midst of the deepest sorrow; for the Swiss mail, which had come to Maier of Silenen as the most distinguished of his countrymen, was awaiting distribution, and Count Gleichen was forced to fulfill his sorrowful duty as messenger. His friend Heinz had lent him his second horse, the black, to ride to the fortress.

While Heinz, pursued by grief and care, sometimes paced up and down the room, sometimes threw himself into the armchair which Frau Barbara, to do him special honour, had placed in the sitting-room, the Minorite monk Benedictus, whom he had brought to Nuremberg, had come uninvited from the neighbouring monastery to give him a morning greeting. The enthusiasm with which St. Francis had filled his soul in his early years had not died out in his aged breast. He who in his

youth had borne the escutcheon of his distinguished race in many a battle and tourney, as a knight worthy of all honour, sympathised with his young equal in rank, and found him in the mood to provide for his eternal salvation. On the ride to Nuremberg he had perceived in Heinz a pious heart and a keen intellect which yearned for higher things. But at that time the joyous youth had not seemed to him ripe for the call of Heaven; when he found him bowed with grief, his eyes, so radiant yesterday, swimming in tears, the conviction was aroused that the Omnipotent One Himself had taken him by the hand to lead the young Swiss, to whom he gratefully wished the best blessings, into the path which the noble Saint of Assisi himself had pointed out to him, and wherein he had found a bliss for which in the world he had vainly yearned.

But his conversation with his young friend had been interrupted, first by the tailor who was to make his mourning garb, then by Siebenburg, and even later he had had no opportunity to school Heinz; for after Seitz had gone Biberli and Kätterle had needed questioning. The result of this was sufficiently startling, and had induced Heinz to send the servant and his sweetheart on the errand from which the former had not yet returned.

When the young knight found himself alone he repeated what the monk had just urged upon him. Then Eva's image rose before him, and he had

asked himself whether she, the devout maiden, would not thank her saint when she learned that he, obedient to her counsel, was beginning to provide for his eternal salvation.

Moved by such thoughts, he had smiled as he told himself that the Minorite seemed to be earnestly striving to win him for the monastery. The old man meant kindly, but how could he renounce the trade of arms, for which he was reared and which he loved?

Then he had been obliged to ride to the fortress to wait upon the Emperor and tell him how deeply he sympathised with his grief. But he was denied admittance. Rudolph desired to be alone, and would not see even his nearest relatives.

On the way home he wished to pass through the inner gate of the Thiergärtnerthor into Thorstrasse to cross the milk market. The violence of the noonday thundershower had already begun to abate, and he had ridden quietly forward, absorbed in his grief, when suddenly a loud, rattling crash had deafened his ears and made him feel as if the earth, the gate, and the fortress were reeling. At the same moment his horse leaped upward with all four feet at once, tossed its clever head convulsively, and sank on its knees.

Half blinded by the dazzling light he saw, and bewildered by the sulphurous vapour he noticed, Heinz nevertheless retained his presence of mind, and had sprung from the saddle ere the quivering



steed fell on its side. Several of the guard at the gate quickly hastened to his assistance, examined the horse with him, and found the noble animal already dead. The lightning had darted along the iron mail on its forehead and the steel bit, and struck the ground without injuring Heinz himself. The soldiers and a Dominican monk who had sought shelter from the rain in the guardhouse extolled this as a great miracle. The people who had crowded to the spot were also seized with pious awe, and followed the knight to whom Heaven had so distinctly showed its favour.

Heinz himself only felt that something extraordinary had happened. The world had gained a new aspect. His life, which yesterday had appeared so immeasurably long, now seemed brief, pitifully brief. Perhaps it would end ere the sun sank to rest in the Haller meadows. He must deem every hour that he was permitted to breathe as a gift, like the earnest money he placed in the trainer's hand in a horse-trade. According to human judgment the lightning should have killed him as well as the horse. If he still lived and breathed and saw the grey clouds drifting across the sky, this was granted only that he might secure his eternal salvation, to which hitherto he had given so little concern. How grateful he ought to be that this respite had been allowed him—that he had not been snatched away unwarned, like Prince Hartmann, in the midst of his sins!

Would not Eva feel the same when she learned what had befallen him? Perhaps Biberli would come back soon—he had been gone so long—and could tell him about her.

Even before the thunderbolt had stirred the inmost depths of his being, when he was merely touched by his deep grief and the monk's admonition, he had striven to guide the servant and his sweetheart into the right path, and the grey-haired monk aided him. The monastic life, it is true, would not have suited Biberli, but he had shown himself ready to atone for the wrong done the poor girl who had kept her troth for three long years and, unasked, went back with her to her angry master.

Ere Heinz set forth on his ride to the fortress he had gone out declaring that he would prove the meaning of his truth and steadfastness, thereby incurring a peril which certainly gave him a right to wear the T and St on his long robe and cap forever. He must expect to be held to a strict account by Ernst Ortlieb. If the incensed father, who was a member of the Council, used the full severity of the law, he might fare even worse than ill. But he had realised the pass to which he had brought his sweetheart, and the Minorite led his honest heart to the perception of the sin he would commit if he permitted her to atone for an act which she had done by his desire—nay, at his command.

With the gold Heinz had given him, and after his assurance that he would retain him in his service even when a married man, he could, it is true, more easily endure being punished with her who, as his wife, would soon be destined to share evil with him as well as good. He had also secured the aid of both his master and the Minorite, and had arranged an account of what had occurred, which placed his own crime and the maid's in a milder light. Finally—and he hoped the best result from this—Kätterle would bring the Ortliebs good news, and he was the very man to make it useful to Jungfrau Els.

So he had committed his destiny to his beloved master, behind whom was the Emperor himself, to the Minorite, who, judging from his great age and dignified aspect, might be an influential man, St. Leodogar, and his own full purse and, with a heart throbbing anxiously, entered the street with the closely muffled Kätterle, to take the unpleasant walk to the exasperated master and father.

The morning had been rife with important events to Biberli also. The means of establishing a household, the conviction that it would be hard for him to remain a contented man without the idol of his heart, and the still more important one that it would not be wise to defer happiness long, because, as the death of young Prince Hartmann had shown, and Pater Benedictus made still more

evident, the possibility of enjoying the pleasures of life might be over far too speedily.

He had been within an ace of losing his Kätterle forever, and through no one's guilt save that of the man on whose truth and steadfastness she so firmly relied. After Siebenburg's departure she had confessed with tears to him, his master, and the monk, what had befallen her, and how she had finally reached the Bindergasse and Sir Heinz Schorlin's lodgings.

When, during the conflagration, fearing punishment, she had fled, she went first to the Dutzen pond. Determined to end her existence, she reached the goal of her nocturnal and her life pilgrimage. The mysterious black water with its rush-grown shore, where ducks quacked and frogs croaked in the sultry gloom, lay before her in the terrible darkness. After she had repeated several Paternosters, the thought that she must die without receiving the last unction weighed heavily on her soul. But this she could not help, and it seemed more terrible to stand in the stocks, like the barber's widow, and be insulted, spit upon by the people, than to endure the flames of purgatory, where so many others—probably among them Bibberli, who had brought her to this pass—would be tortured with her.

So she laid down the bundle which—she did not know why herself—she had brought with her, and took off her shoes as if she were going into the

water to bathe. Just at that moment she suddenly saw a red light glimmering on the dark surface of the water. It could not be the reflection of the fires of purgatory, as she had thought at first. It certainly did not proceed from the forge on the opposite shore, now closed, for its outlines rose dark and motionless against the moon. No—a brief glance around verified it—the light came from the burning of the convent. The sky was coloured a vivid scarlet in two places, but the glow was brightest towards the southeastern part of the city, where St. Klarengasse must be. Then she was overpowered by torturing curiosity. Must she die without knowing how much the fire had injured the newly built convent, on whose site she had enjoyed the springtime of love, and how the good Sisters fared? It seemed impossible, and her greatest fault for the first time proved a blessing. It drew her back from the Dutzen pond to the city.

On reaching the Marienthurm she learned that only a barn and a cow stable had been destroyed by the flames. For this trivial loss she had suffered intense anxiety and been faithless to her resolution to seek death, which ends all fears.

Vexed by her own weakness, she determined to go back to her employer's house and there accept whatever fate the saints bestowed. But when she saw a light still shining through the parchment panes in the room occupied by the two Es, she

imagined that Herr Ernst was pronouncing judgment upon Eva. In doing so her own guilt must be recalled, and the thought terrified her so deeply that she joined the people returning from the fire, for whom the Frauenthor still stood open, and allowed the crowd to carry her on with them to St. Kunigunde's chapel in St. Lawrence's church; and when some, passing the great Imhof residence, turned into the Kotgasse, she followed.

Hitherto she had walked on without goal or purpose, but here the question where to seek shelter confronted her; for the torchbearers who had lighted the way disappeared one after another in the various houses. Deep darkness suddenly surrounded her, and she was seized with terror. But ere the last torch vanished, its light fell upon one of the brass basins which hung in front of the barbers' shops.

The barber! The woman whom she had seen in the stocks was the widow of one, and the house where she granted the lovers the meeting, on whose account she had been condemned to so severe a punishment, was in the Kotgasse, and had been pointed out to her. It must be directly opposite.

The thought entered her mind that the woman who had endured such a terrible punishment, for a crime akin to her own, would understand better than any one else the anguish of her heart. How could the widow yonder refuse her companion in guilt a compassionate reception!

It was a happy idea, but she would never have ventured to rouse the woman from her sleep, so she must wait. But the first grey light of dawn was already appearing in the eastern horizon on the opposite side of the square of St. Lawrence, and perhaps Frau Ratzer would open her house early.

The street did honour to the name of Kotgasse.\* Holding her dress high around her, Kätterle waded across to the northern row of houses and reached the plank sidewalk covered with mud to her ankles; but at the same moment a door directly in front of her opened, and two persons, a man and a woman, entered the street and glided by; but they came from Frau Ratzer's—she recognised it by the bow-window above the entrance. The maid hurried towards the door, which still stood open, and on its threshold was the woman to whom she intended to pay her early visit.

Almost unable to speak, she entreated her to grant a poor girl, who did not know where to seek shelter at this hour, the protection of her house.

The widow silently drew Kätterle into the dark, narrow entry, shut the door, and led her into a neat, gaily ornamented room. A lamp which was still burning hung from the ceiling, but Frau Ratzer raised the tallow candle she had carried to the door, threw its light upon her face, and nodded

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\* *Kot* or *koth*—mire.

approvingly. Kätterle was a pretty girl, and the flush of shame which crimsoned her cheeks was very becoming. The widow probably thought so, too, for she stroked them with her fat hand, promising, as she did so, to receive her and let her want for nothing if she proved an obedient little daughter. Then she pinched the girl's arm with the tips of her fingers so sharply that she shrank back and timidly told the woman what had brought her there, saying that she was and intended to remain a respectable girl, and had sought shelter with Frau Ratzer because she knew what a sore disgrace she had suffered for the same fault which had driven her from home.

But the widow, starting as if stung by a scorpion, denounced Kätterle as an impudent hussy, who rightfully belonged in the stocks, to which the base injustice of the money-bags in the court had condemned her. There was no room in her clean house for anyone who reminded her of this outrage and believed that she had really committed so shameful an act. Then, seizing the maid by the shoulders, she pushed her into the street.

Meanwhile it had grown light. The sun had just risen in the east above the square of St. Lawrence and spread a golden fan of rays over the azure sky. The radiant spectacle did not escape the eyes of the frightened girl, and she rejoiced because it gave her the assurance that the terrifying darkness of the night was over.



How fresh the morning was, how clear and beautiful the light of the young day! And it shone not only on the great and the good, but on the lowly, the poor, and the wicked. Even for the horrible woman within the sky adorned itself with the exquisite blue and glorious brilliancy.

Uttering a sigh of relief she soon reached the Church of St. Lawrence, which the old sexton was just opening. She was the first person who entered the stately house of God that morning and knelt in one of the pews to pray.

This had been the right thing for her to do. Dear Lord! Where was there any maid in greater trouble, yet Heaven had preserved her from the death on a red-hot gridiron which had rendered St. Lawrence, whose name the church bore, a blessed martyr. Compared with that, even standing in the pillory was not specially grievous. So she poured out her whole soul to the saint, confessing everything which grieved and oppressed her, until the early mass began. She had even confided to him that she was from Sarnen in Switzerland, and had neither friend nor countryman here in Nuremberg save her lover, the true and steadfast Biberli. Yet no! There was one person from her home who probably would do her a kindness, the wife of the gatekeeper in the von Zollern castle, a native of Berne, who had come to Nuremberg and the fortress as the maid of the Countess Elizabeth of Hapsburg, the present Burgravine. This ex-

cellent woman could give her better counsel than any one, and she certainly owed the recollection of Frau Gertrude to her patron saint.

After a brief thanksgiving she left the church and went to the fortress.

As she expected, her countrywoman received her kindly; and after Kätterle had confided everything to her, and in doing so mentioned Wolff Eysvogel, the betrothed husband of the elder of her young mistresses, Frau Gertrude listened intently and requested her to wait a short time.

Yet one quarter of an hour after another elapsed before she again appeared. Her husband, the Bernese warder, a giant of a man to whom the red and yellow Swiss uniform and glittering halberd he carried in his hand were very becoming, accompanied his wife.

After briefly questioning Kätterle, he exacted a solemn promise of secrecy and then motioned to her to follow him. Meanwhile the maid had been informed how the duel between Wolff Eysvogel and Ulrich Vorchtel had ended, but while she still clasped her hands in horror, the Swiss had opened the door of a bright, spacious apartment, where Els Ortlieb's betrothed husband received her with a kind though sorrowful greeting. Then he continued his writing, and at last gave her two letters. One, on whose back he drew a little heart, that she might not mistake it for the other, was addressed to his betrothed bride; the second to Heinz Schor-

lin, whom Wolff—no, her ears did not deceive her—called the future husband of his sister-in-law Eva.

At breakfast, which she shared with her country people and their little daughter, Kätterle would have liked to learn how Wolff reached the fortress, but the gatekeeper maintained absolute silence on this subject.

The maid at last, without hindrance, reached the Deichsler house and found Biberli at home. She ought to have returned to the Ortliebs in his company long before, but the knight still vainly awaited his servant's appearance. He missed him sorely, since it did not enter his head that his faithful shadow, Biberli, knew nothing of the thunderbolt which had almost robbed him of his master and killed his pet, the dun horse. Besides, he was anxious about his fate and curious to learn how he had found the Ortlieb sisters; for, though Eva alone had power to make Heinz Schorlin's heart beat faster, the misfortune of poor Els affected him more deeply as the thought that he was its cause grew more and more painful.

Wolff's letter, which Kätterle delivered to him, revealed young Eysvogel's steadfast love for the hapless girl. In it he also alluded to his nocturnal interview with Heinz, and in cordial words admitted that he thought he had found in him a sincere friend, to whom, if to any one, he would not grudge his fair young sister-in-law Eva. Then he described how the unfortunate duel had occurred.

After mentioning what had excited young Ulrich Vorchtel's animosity, he related that, soon after his interview with Heinz, he had met young Vorchtel, accompanied by several friends. Ulrich had barred his way, loading him with invectives so fierce and so offensive to his honour, that he was obliged to accept the challenge. As he wore no weapon save the dagger in his belt, he used the sword which a German knight among Ulrich's companions offered him. Calm in the consciousness that he had given his former friend's sister no reason to believe in his love, and firmly resolved merely to bestow a slight lesson on her brother, he took the weapon. But when Ulrich shouted to the crusader that the blade he lent was too good for the treacherous hand he permitted to wield it, his blood boiled, and with his first powerful thrust all was over.

The German knight had then introduced himself as a son of the Burgrave von Zollern and taken him to the castle, where, with his father's knowledge, the noble young Knight Hospitaller concealed him, and the point now was to show the matter, which was undoubtedly a breach of the peace, to the Emperor Rudolph in the right light. The young Burgrave thought that he, Heinz Schorlin, could aid in convincing the sovereign, who would lend him a ready ear, that he, Wolff, had only drawn his sword under compulsion. So truly as Heinz himself hoped to be a happy man

through Eva's love, he must help him to bridge the chasm which, by his luckless deed, separated him from his betrothed bride.

Heinz had had this letter read aloud twice. Then when Biberli had gone and he rode to the fortress, he had resolved to do everything in his power for the young Nuremberg noble who had so quickly won his regard, but the sorely stricken imperial father had refused to see him, and therefore it was impossible to take any step in the matter.

Yet Wolff's letter had showed that he believed him in all earnestness to be Eva's future husband, and thus strengthened his resolve to woo her as soon as he felt a little more independent.

After the thunderbolt had killed the horse under him, and the old Minorite had again come and showed him that the Lord Himself, through the miracle He had wrought, had taken him firmly and swiftly by the hand as His chosen follower, it seemed to his agitated mind, when he took up the letter a second time, as though everything Wolff had written about him and Els's sister was not intended for him.

Eva was happiness—but Heaven had vouchsafed a miracle to prove the transitoriness of earthly life, that by renunciation here he might attain endless bliss above. Sacrifice and again sacrifice, according to the Minorite, was the magic

spell that opened the gates of heaven, and what harder sacrifice could he offer than that of his love? "Renounce! renounce!" he heard a voice within cry in his ears as, with much difficulty, he himself read Wolff's letter, but whatever he might cast away of all that was his, he still would fail to take up his cross as Father Benedictus required; for even as an unknown beggar he would have enjoyed—this he firmly believed—in Eva's love the highest earthly bliss. Yet divine love was said to be so much more rapturous, and how much longer it endured!

And she? Did not the holy expression of her eyes and the aspiration of her own soul show that she would understand him, approve his sacrifice, imitate it, and exchange earthly for heavenly love? Neither could renounce it without inflicting deep wounds on the heart, but every drop of blood which gushed from them, the Minorite said, would add new and heavy weight to their claim to eternal salvation.

Ay, Heinz would try to resign Eva! But when he yielded to the impulse to read Wolff's letter again he felt like a dethroned prince whom some stranger, ignorant of his misfortune, praises for his mighty power.

The visions of the future which the grey-haired monk conjured up, all that he told him of his own regeneration, transformation, and the happiness which he would find as a dis-

ciple of St. Francis in poverty, liberty, and the silent struggle for eternal bliss, everything which he described with fervid eloquence, increased the tumult in the young knight's deeply agitated soul.

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